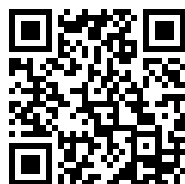

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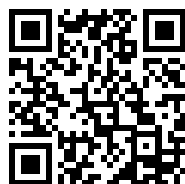
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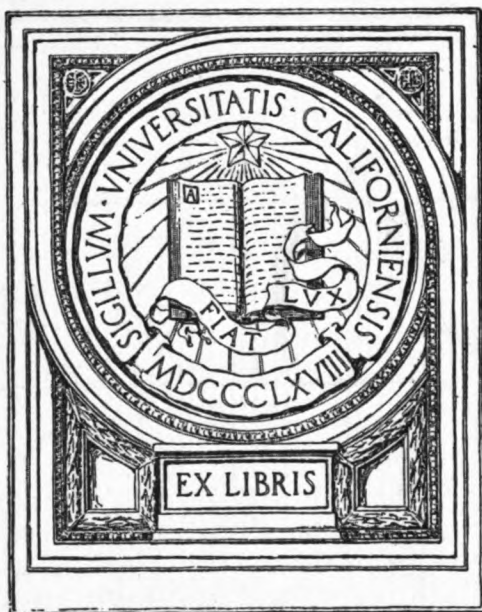
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IN THE ROMANCE LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

Edited by

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Univ. of
California

ESSAYS

ON THE

VITA NUOVA

BY

J. E. SHAW



PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
PRINCETON, N. J.
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ESSAYS
ON THE
VITA NUOVA

E noi corriamo a' torridi soli, a' cieli stellati,
Per note plaghe e incognite, quai cavalier fatati,
Dietro un velato amor.

CARDUCCI.

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TO

MARJORIE L. M. SHAW

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am extraordinarily indebted to the Curator of the "Fiske" Dante and Petrarch Collections of Cornell University, Professor G.L. Hamilton, and to the Librarian of that University and his staff, as well as to the staff of the University of Toronto library, for their efficient kindness and indispensable help in providing me with books. I am most sincerely grateful to Professor C. A. Chant of the University of Toronto, who patiently explained to me certain astronomical matters, and to Professor G. V. Callegari of Verona, a friend of long standing, who spared no pains in finding and obtaining copies of publications otherwise inaccessible to me.

The editor of the *Elliott Monographs* has been my friend and adviser. I am not indebted to him on this account any more than I was before, because that would be impossible.

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ESSAYS ON THE *VITA NUOVA*

I

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THE DATE OF THE *VITA NUOVA*¹

The evidence available for ascertaining the date of the *Vita Nuova* — that is, the time when the prose commentary was written and the poems were arranged in their present order — consists almost entirely of what Dante himself tells us: there is very little from other sources. Much, then, depends on the credibility of our author, and that credibility will never be called in question by me. Where his statements are not clear on the surface, or seem contradictory, my only concern will be to discover what he wished us to believe.

But, even if the credibility of Dante be granted, the difficulties are still great. The long and often hypercritical discussion about the dating of this book has not hitherto resulted in a consensus of opinion as to any one fact. There is no conclusion, or evidence from which conclusions may be drawn, which has not at some time or other been challenged either reasonably or unreasonably. In our search for the truth we shall be moving in a highly sophisticated atmosphere, and, as Parodi said in his essay on the dates of the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*: “ Bisogna riflettere che le ipotesi erranee o fantastiche non sono soltanto un inutile e spiacevole ingombro, ma concorrono in molte maniere a far diventare difficili anche le cose più facili,

formando intorno a sé stesse come un ambiente artificiale, dove neppure i critici più spregiudicati e più acuti riescono a conservare intatta la libertà del loro discernimento."²

We shall therefore have to move carefully, and it will be our task from the very beginning to distinguish as well as we may between conclusions which are not reasonably assailable — although they have nevertheless been attacked — and others which are fairly debatable, and then between the latter and doubtful conjectures. To quote Parodi again: "Resta ancora un barlume di speranza che il modo di giungere a risultati concreti ci sia."³

The opinion of some scholars that the present form of the book is not its original form, but that the concluding chapters were added after Dante had written what we have of the *Convivio*, will have to be considered. Deferring that consideration until later, it can be said now that, at least for the original form, the internal evidence — the evidence from the *Vita Nuova* itself — is sufficient to establish limits *a quo* and *ad quem*.

Chapter xxix (xxx), 1, gives us the date of the death of Beatrice, the 8th or the 19th of June, 1290,⁴ and the first anniversary of her death is mentioned in chapter xxxiv (xxxv), 1. In chapters xxx (xxxi), 3 and xxxii (xxxiii), 1, Guido Cavalcanti, who died in August 1300,⁵ is referred to as alive.⁶ The *Vita Nuova*, in its original form at least, was therefore composed between June 1291 and August 1300.

No more accurate delimitation than the above can be derived from the text of the *Vita Nuova* by itself, for the attempt to connect the episode of chapter xl (xli) — the passage through Florence of pilgrims on their way to Rome — with the Jubilee of 1300 was completely defeated by the thorough-going research of Rajna more than forty years ago.⁷ Nor can the strenuous arguments of those who have tried to show that the *Vita Nuova* presupposes a clear plan of the *Commedia* already in its author's mind,

and that therefore the "libello" could not have been composed until near the time when he began to write his greater work, be regarded as even approaching demonstration. They read into the account of the "mirabile visione," in the last chapter, more than we have a right to understand; they sense the plan of the *Commedia* even in the verses of the canzone *Donna Pietosa*; they point to the supposed prophecy in *Donne che avete*, which is more than doubtful.⁸

We must therefore look outside the *Vita Nuova* for more information, and it is natural to turn first to that first chapter of the *Convivio* in which Dante seems to be making a definite statement as to the time when the *Vita Nuova* was composed. The famous passage is as follows:

E se ne la presente opera, la quale è Convivio nominata e vo' che sia, più virilmente si trattasse che ne la Vita Nuova, non intendo però a quella in parte alcuna derogare, ma maggiormente giovare per questa quella; veggendo sì come ragionevolmente quella fervida e passionata, questa temperata e virile esser conviene. Chè altro si conviene e dire e operare ad una etade che ad altra; perchè certi costumi sono idonei e laudabili ad una etade che sono sconci e biasimevoli ad altra, sì come di sotto, nel quarto trattato di questo libro sarà propria ragione mostrata. E io in quella dinanzi, a l'entrata de la mia gioventute parlai, e in questa dipoi, quella già trapassata.⁹

In the last sentence of this passage — "E io in quella dinanzi, a l'entrata de la mia gioventute parlai, e in questa dipoi, quella già trapassata" — the punctuation shows that the editor of the *Convivio* abandoned his former view that *dinanzi a* is a preposition governing *l'entrata*, and *dipoi* an adverb modifying *trapassata*¹⁰, and decided that *quella dinanzi* is a demonstrative expression referring to the *Vita Nuova* and *questa dipoi* another referring to the *Convivio*. That he was right in this decision is evident, for an example like *di poi quella già trapassata* in the sense of *dopo che quella fu già trapassata* is not to be found in

Dante, and, on the other hand, the expressions as they now stand are closely paralleled by the authentic: ...“e quello di prima fosse amore così come questo di poi...”¹¹

In the previous part of the passage Dante says that the manner of the *Convivio* is more virile than that of the *Vita Nuova*, which is emotional, and he refers to the fourth book of the *Convivio*, in which “la gioventute” is distinguished from “l’adolescenzia” by somewhat similar qualities. He would seem, then, to be associating the *Vita Nuova* with the period of adolescence and the *Convivio* with youth. These periods are purposely defined somewhat loosely in the fourth book, because their extent depends somewhat on the constitution of each individual,¹² and it is said first that “l’adolescenzia” “dura in fino al venticinquesimo anno,” and later that “l’adolescenzia è in venticinque anni”;¹³ and it is said that “la gioventute nel quarantacinquesimo anno si compie,” that is, somewhere in the forty-fifth year. In any case, however, whether we consider adolescence to be a period of twenty-four or twenty-five years or a little more, it is known that the prose of the *Vita Nuova* was not written within the poet’s adolescence, and so it has been not unreasonably surmised that he is thinking of the verse, which was almost entirely written during that period.¹⁴ The prepositions in the two expressions “in quella dinanzi” and “in questa dipoi” confirm this opinion, for it would seem as if Dante, contrasting the youthfulness of the *Vita Nuova* with the maturity of the *Convivio*, were comparing the verse of the former — written from 1283 on — with the last words of the latter, which, if the work had been executed in fifteen books, as planned, would have been finished long after 1310, the year when his “gioventute” ended.¹⁵ And if the expression “a l’entrata de la mia gioventute” seems to be a more definite chronological indication, it should be remembered that in the fourth book it is said that “questa prima età” — that is, adolescence — “è porta e via, per la quale s’entra nella

nostra buona vita," and that immediately afterward adolescence is called "questa entrata,"¹⁶ so that "entrata" in the passage we are considering may also mean the whole period of adolescence and "a l'entrata" may simply be a figurative way of representing adolescence as the gateway of youth, and may mean no more than "during my adolescence."

I have taken some pains to describe this view of the meaning of *Convivio* I, 1, 16-17, because whether true or false it is at least possible and even plausible, and as long as it cannot be shown to be false the passage in question, which seems at first sight to promise light on the date of the *Vita Nuova*, can contribute nothing by itself to our information. It deserved some discussion because it has played such an important part in previous arguments about the date, and I shall return to it when I have produced evidence which will lead, I hope, to our accepting a more correct view of its meaning.

A reliable and useful bit of information is to be found in another famous passage of the *Convivio*, the first part of which is as follows:

... dico che, come per me fu perduto lo primo diletto de la mia anima, de la quale fatta è menzione di sopra,¹⁷ io rimasi di tanta tristizia punto, che conforto non mi valeva alcuno. Tuttavia, dopo alquanto tempo, la mia mente, che si argomentava di sanare, provide, poi che nè'l mio nè l'altrui consolare valea, ritornare al modo che alcuno sconcolato avea tenuto a consolarsi : e misimi a leggere quello non conosciuto da molti libro di Boezio, nel quale, cattivo e discacciato, consolato s'avea. E udendo ancora che Tullio scritto avea un altro libro, nel quale, trattando de l'Amistade, avea toccate parole de la consolazione di Lelio, uomo eccellentissimo, ne la morte di Scipione amico suo, misimi a leggere quello. E avvegna che duro mi fosse ne la prima entrare ne la loro sentenza, finalmente v'entrai tanto entro, quanto l'arte di gramatica ch'io avea e un poco di mio ingegno potea fare; per lo quale ingegno molte cose, quasi come sognando, già vedea, sì come ne la Vita Nuova si può vedere.¹⁸

Dante says, then, that the death of Beatrice left him utterly disconsolate until, after a while, he sought comfort in reading Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy and Cicero's *De Amicitia*. He found it difficult at first to understand the meaning of these books, but at last succeeded in comprehending as much as was made possible by what knowledge of Latin he had, together with his own mother wit. But the last sentence cited above, beginning "per lo quale ingegno," is susceptible of two interpretations according as the word "già" is understood to mean *already* in the sense of *before this time*, or *already* in the sense of *by this time*. According to the first interpretation the sentence would mean: "By means of which mother wit I was already [before profiting by the study of Boethius and Cicero] able to see many things as in a dream, as appears in the *Vita Nuova*." According to the second, the meaning would be: "By means of which mother wit I was already [after grasping to some extent the meaning of Boethius and Cicero] able to see many things as in a dream, as appears in the *Vita Nuova*."¹⁰ But let us resume the reading of Dante, who continues as follows :

E sì come esserè suole che l'uomo va cercando argento e fuori de la 'ntenzione truova oro, lo quale occulta cagione presenta, non forse senza divino imperio; io, che cercava di consolarme, trovai non solamente a le mie lagrime rimedio, ma vocabuli d'autori e di scienze e di libri: li quali considerando, giudicava bene che la filosofia, che era donna di questi autori, di queste scienze e di questi libri, fosse somma cosa. E imaginava lei fatta come una donna gentile, e non la poteva immaginare in atto alcuno, se non misericordioso; per che sì volentieri lo senso di vero la mirava, che appena lo potea volgere da quella. E da questo imaginare cominciai ad andare là dov'ella si dimostrava veracemente, cioè ne le scuole de li religiosi e a le disputazioni de li filosofanti; sì che in picciol tempo, forse di trenta mesi, cominciai tanto a sentire de la sua dolcezza, che lo suo amore cacciava e distruggeva ogni altro pensiero. Per che io, sentendomi levare dal pensiero del primo amore a la virtù di questo, quasi maravigliandomi apersi la bocca

nel parlare de la proposta canzone, ... Cominciai dunque a dire : *Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete.*²⁰

The result of his reading in Boethius and Cicero was that he not only found in them the consolation he was seeking, but he also gained information regarding authors and sciences and books; he was impressed with the importance of the study of philosophy, and imagined Philosophy impersonated as a gentle lady, etc. And after that ("da questo immaginare") he began to frequent the places and the society in which he might learn more of the science, so that in a comparatively short time he was so enthralled with it that he could think of nothing else. It was then that he began to feel himself weaned from the previous love by the attractions of the new study, and wrote the canzone *Voi che intendendo*.

Disregarding, for the present, all other matters which invite enquiry,²¹ I wish to draw attention to the fact that in this passage Dante is giving us an account of how he came to write *Voi che intendendo*, and also of the stages by which he passed from a state of ignorance as to philosophical matters to a state of absorption in the study of philosophy. The first stage was the reading and study of Boethius and Cicero, and during this stage he was impressed with the grandeur of philosophy, and his imagination was stimulated to personify the science — for reasons which we need not now discuss — in a manner more agreeable than that of Boethius. The second stage, which in the account is separated from the first by the words "E da questo immaginare cominciai ad andare, ecc.," was the frequenting of schools and philosophical conversations, and during this latter stage he became completely absorbed in the study of philosophy. At the end of this second stage he wrote *Voi che intendendo*.

As for the *Vita Nuova*, even if we conclude from this passage that it was not composed before the study of Boethius

and Cicero, it must, at the latest, be attached to the first of the above-mentioned stages, and not to the second. It belongs to the time when, with the help of his own mother wit, the poet "molte cose, quasi sognando già vedea," and this time is earlier than the time when the love of philosophy "cacciava e distruggeva ogni altro pensiero" and the poet felt himself "levare dal pensiero del primo amore a la virtù di questa," as it is also earlier than the time when he began to frequent the schools of the religious orders: that is, the *Vita Nuova* was composed before the canzone *Voi che intendendo*, which belongs to the second stage.²²

This conclusion — which has generally been neglected by critics because the passage that makes it certain is full of interest with regard to other and more complicated questions — will be of the greatest service to us in dating the *Vita Nuova*, if we can establish the date of the canzone *Voi che intendendo*. Even without discovering this latter date we might be reasonably justified in taking a step forward, for in the eighth canto of the *Paradiso* Dante is greeted by Carlo Martello king of Hungary, who quotes to him the first verse of *Voi che intendendo*, and reminds him of their friendship on earth.²³ Charles died in August 1295,²⁴ and so we might conclude that the poem, and consequently the *Vita Nuova*, at least in its original form, was composed before that time. However, we cannot deny the possibility — although to my mind it is no more than a mere possibility — that Charles might have become acquainted with the canzone after his death, and so, refraining for the present from asserting that the *Vita Nuova* was composed before the death of the king of Hungary, we must do our best to discover when *Voi che intendendo* was written.²⁵

We shall not be able to do that, however, unless we are willing to enquire patiently into the difficult question of the apparent conflict between the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio* regarding Dante's affection for the Donna Gen-

tile, the subject of the canzone. That apparent conflict consists in the fact that, whereas in the *Vita Nuova* Dante repents bitterly of his temporary aberration from worship of the memory of Beatrice — a contemptible aberration caused by the attractions of the Donna Gentile — and returns to his worship of Beatrice with a mystical enthusiasm that is voiced in the announcement of a future work in which she shall be praised as no other woman ever was, in the *Convivio* he courteously but resolutely places Beatrice in the background of his thoughts, and devotes himself to the praise of the Donna Gentile, declaring that she is a more worthy object for his love than Beatrice.²⁶

The most recent solution of this problem is to be found in the theory of "rifacimento", according to which the original version of the *Vita Nuova* ended when the Donna Gentile was uppermost in the poet's thoughts, and the last chapters describing the reaction against the Donna Gentile and the return to Beatrice were added after 1312 when Dante was undertaking the Divine Comedy, that is, after the writing of the *Convivio* had been suspended. If the theory were correct it would explain how Dante is able, in *Conv.* II, 11, to refer to the account in the *Vita Nuova*, and then to continue with the story of his increasing devotion to the Donna Gentile, without mentioning the return to Beatrice with which our version of the *Vita Nuova* concludes.

Pietrobono, the chief exponent of this theory,²⁷ argues that the words of *Convivio* II, 11, 1, "... quella gentile donna, cui feci menzione ne la fine de la *Vita Nuova* ...," show that the author is thinking of a version of the *Vita Nuova* different from the one we know, for the "fine" of our version is concerned with the glorification of Beatrice. He also points out that in *Vita Nuova* xli (xlii), 1, Dante says: "E dissi allora uno sonetto, lo quale narra del mio stato e manda' lo loro co lo precedente sonetto accompagnato, e con un altro che comincia: *Venite a intender*." The

poet, Pietrobono thinks, would not have written "un altro" if he had remembered that the sonnet *Venite a intendere li sospiri miei* appeared in chapter xxxii (xxxiii), and that it had already been given to the friend who was also a relative of Beatrice. This forgetfulness of Dante's shows, according to the critic, that when he was writing chapter xli (xlii) a long time had elapsed since he had written chapter xxxii (xxxiii).

Pietrobono's theory, however, goes much farther than I have indicated, for he finds evidences of a double "rifiamento" and, on the basis of resemblances between Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova* and the Donna Gentile in the *Convivio* and the *Canzoniere*, he concludes that the latter writings are the development of the story of the Donna Gentile as we have it in the *Vita Nuova*, which work was first remade into an introduction to the *Convivio*,²⁸ and later remade again into an introduction to the *Commedia*.

Simpler but similar in substance is the theory of Ortiz, who says that the last six chapters of the *Vita Nuova* presuppose the *Convivio* and must therefore have been written later. He argues as follows: The spiritual evolution of the poet appears in his works in three stages: first in the *Vita Nuova*, which is mystical and has for protagonist a mystical Beatrice; secondly in the *Convivio*, which is rationalistic and has its Donna Gentile, who is at the same time a sensual and philosophic love; thirdly in the *Commedia*, which is theological and has a theological Beatrice. "Ora, poi che negli ultimi capitoli della *Vita Nuova* si parla chiaramente di questa evoluzione come già avvenuta, e, nell'ultimo capitolo, si accenna chiaramente alla *Divina Commedia*, è chiaro che gli ultimi capitoli della *Vita Nuova* debbano essere posteriori al *Convivio*."²⁹

Without stressing the obvious objections that the dates of the composition of the *Commedia* are among the most seriously disputed matters in the biography of Dante, and that a *Vita Nuova* ending either with the death of Bea-

trice or with an estrangement from her in favour of another woman would be an incongruous narrative, and without the symmetry which is a striking character of the work as we know it, there are two objections which are in my opinion fatal to the whole theory of "rifacimento". First, none of the manuscripts of the *Vita Nuova* shows any trace of any such "rifacimento", and as early a *dantista* as Boccaccio knew of no other version than the one we have. Secondly, in chapter xxxix (xl), 2, Dante describes the period of devotion to the Donna Gentile as "alquanti die." According to the theories of both Petrobono and Ortiz he used the expression "alquanti die" to describe a period which could not be less than twelve years and a half, and which, indeed, according to Petrobono, is fourteen years.³⁰ Granting that Dante's somewhat vague description of the period in question need not be judged as if it were intended to be accurate, even then this would be a barefaced misrepresentation. Let us therefore dismiss the theory that involves such a supposition, and let us conclude, as we may unhesitatingly, that the present form of the *Vita Nuova* is the same as its original form. It was composed in this form, probably before 1295 and almost certainly before *Voi che intendendo* was written.³¹

To determine the date of the canzone, the occasion of the writing of which is described in *Convivio* II, II, it is necessary to decide what is the date which, at the beginning of that chapter, the author defines astronomically as follows:

Cominciando adunque, dico che la stella di Venere due fiate rivolta era in quello suo cerchio che la fa parere serotina e matutina, secondo diversi tempi, appresso lo trapassamento di quella Beatrice beata che vive in cielo con li angeli e in terra con la mia anima, quando...

The date indicated is the time after the death of Beatrice when Venus had revolved twice in the circle which causes

the planet to appear as morning and evening star. If we are in any doubt as to what circles are described by Venus and as to which of them causes her to appear as morning and evening star, we should have recourse to the authority to whom Dante himself directs us when he cites him as follows:³²

Li quali [movimenti di questo cielo³³], secondo che nel libro de l'Aggregazion[i] de le Stelle epilogoato si truova da la migliore dimostrazione de li astrologi, sono tre: uno, secondo che la stella si muove verso lo suo epicyclo; l'altro, secondo che lo epicyclo si muove con tutto lo cielo igualmente con quello del Sole; lo terzo, secondo che tutto quello cielo si muove, seguendo lo movimento de la stellata spera, da occidente a oriente, in cento anni uno grado.

The authority, of course, is Alfraganus who, in the work referred to by Dante, writes as follows:³⁴

Jam igitur manifestum est quod cursus qui videtur in orbe signorum uniusquisque harum stellarum 4 quae sunt praeter Mercurium (i.e. Saturnus, Juppiter, Mars, Venus) aggregantur [sic] ex tribus motibus tantum videlicet motu stellae in orbe revolutionis et motu centri orbis revolutionis in orbe egredientis centri et motu omnium spae-rarum aequali motui stellarum fixarum.

The three movements or circles of Venus, therefore, are: first that of the planet in its epicycle, second that of the centre of the epicycle upon the eccentric deferent, third the very slow movement which is shared with the sphere of fixed stars. The daily movement, once round the Earth in twenty-four hours, which is common to all stars, is presupposed but not mentioned here by Alfraganus: Dante mentions it in his next sentence: "Ancora si muove..., ogni dì naturale una fiata, ecc."³⁵

Now if we consider that, according to the Ptolemaic system and to Alfraganus himself,³⁶ the centres of the epicycles both of Mercury and Venus are always in the same straight line with the Earth and the Sun, it will be

plain that, in the first place, the centres of these epicycles will move with the Sun along the path of the Zodiac, and in the same time as the Sun;³⁷ and also that, in the second place, the only one of the three movements of Venus that can cause the planet to appear as morning and evening star is the revolution in the epicycle, by virtue of which the planet appears alternately before and behind the Sun.³⁸

The period of the revolution of the epicycle of Venus is clearly given by Alfraganus as follows:

*Luna quidem; revolvit orbem revolutionis in 27 diebus et 13 horis et 3^a horae fere et Mercurius in tribus mensibus et 26 diebus fere et Venus in anno persico et 7 mensibus et 9 diebus fere...*³⁹

An "annus persicus" is a year of 365 days;⁴⁰ seven Persian months are 210 days: adding these and 9 days we find that the period is 584 days. The result is confirmed by another statement where the astronomer is stating the distance travelled per day by Venus in her epicycle, and by her deferent, as follows :

*Motuum autem quantitates sunt ita. Venus namque movetur in die uno in orbe quidem revolutionis 37 minutis de partibus orbis revolutionis et currit centrum orbis revolutionis in orbe excentrico aequantem [sic] cursum simile cursui solis et Mercurii scilicet 59 minutis.*⁴¹

If Venus travels 37 minutes of the orbit of her epicycle in one day, she will travel the whole 360 degrees in $583 \frac{29}{37}$ days. The discrepancy between this result and 584 days is covered by the word "fere" in the passage above.

Two revolutions of the epicycle after the death of Beatrice are equivalent to 1168 days after June 1290, that is August 1293; this, then, is the date which Dante has defined for us in this passage. There is nothing new in the date or in the manner of discovering it, and if I have dwelt

upon the whole matter longer than it deserved, it is only because it is still considered uncertain by some. Any uncertainty, however, is due either to a non-Ptolemaic view of the function of the epicycle (a view, consequently, which was not that of Dante) or to a desire to be led to a date other than August 1293.⁴²

But, if the date itself is certain, the event which is being dated is not so easy to determine, and it is proper for one who has reached an unusual conclusion to refrain from dogmatizing. Dante's words are:

Cominciando adunque dico che la stella di Venere due fiate rivolta era in quello suo cerchio che, ecc...., quando quella gentile donna, cui feci menzione ne la fine de la *Vita Nuova*, parve primamente, accompagnata d'Amore, a gli occhi miei e prese luogo alcuno ne la mia mente.

It is usually supposed, and that quite plausibly, that the event in question is the first appearance of the Donna Gentile, but it is a supposition which cannot be maintained without encountering obstacles so formidable that they have never yet been removed.

In the first place, if the Donna Gentile did not appear until August 1293, then the "alquanto tempo" after the anniversary of the death of Beatrice, mentioned in chapter xxxv (xxxvi) of the *Vita Nuova*, must have been a period of more than two years, and there would be a gap of more than two years in the narrative between chapters xxxiv (xxxv) and xxxv (xxxvi). Now "alquanto tempo" is a vague expression, but it is used in chapter xxxi (xxxii) — "Poi che li miei occhi ebbero per alquanto tempo lagrimato" — for a comparatively short period.

Beside the nine years between the first appearance of Beatrice and the second, which are carefully accounted for in *Vita Nuova* III (II), there is only one other instance of a long gap in the narrative, and that instance is one where the author steps in and warns us of the lapse of time. It

is in chapter v, 4, where he says "Con questa donna mi celai alquanti anni e mesi," and the following chapter vi covers the space of those years and months. Otherwise the six years between chapter III (II), which deals with an event of 1283, and chapter XXII, which mentions the death of Folco Portinari, 1289, are spread over nineteen chapters; the one year between the latter event and the death of Beatrice, mentioned in chapter XXVIII (XXIX), occupies six chapters; and the one year leading to the mention of the anniversary, 1291, has six more, and then would come the unprecedented gap of two years and more concealed under the words "alquanto tempo" which leave the reader under the impression that the Donna Gentile appeared very soon after June 1291.

Secondly, if it is the first appearance of the Donna Gentile that is being dated in *Convivio* II, II, the statements of this book are in hopeless conflict with those of the *Vita Nuova*, and we must once for all renounce all hope of reconciling them, for chapter II continues apparently repeating the first part only of the story of the poet's new love as it is in the *Vita Nuova*, and the rest of books II and III pursue the narrative, completely ignoring the heart-felt repudiation of the new love and the triumphant return to Beatrice which are the subjects of the "fine de la Vita Nuova" to which the author has specifically invited our attention in the opening words of this chapter.

Many, and among them some of the greatest, "dantisti" have formally made this renunciation, and have condemned as futile all attempts to reconcile the two accounts. Barbi says, for example: "Io sono sempre più convinto che per voler risolvere con probabilità d'esser nel vero, le questioni attinenti al periodo della *Vita Nuova* e agli amori reali, cioè per donne vere, in essa rappresentati, bisogna attenersi esclusivamente ai dati di quest'opera e alle rime di quel periodo; non mescolarvi i dati del *Convivio*, posti, per altre esigenze dello spirito di Dante, in contrad-

dizione con quelle che ispirarono il racconto dell'opera giovanile."⁴³ "Massima eccellente," says Zonta, "e che lascia un respiro maggiore al critico rispetto a quei dati che non concordano nelle due opere."⁴⁴ But this "respiro maggiore" is bought at the price of admitting that Dante intends to mystify even his most intelligent and most sympathetic readers, for, whether we suppose that the *Donna Gentile* is only a symbol for Philosophy both in the *Vita Nuova* and in the *Convivio*, or that she is a real woman in the former work and a symbol in the latter, or a real woman in the *Vita Nuova* and both real woman and symbol in the *Convivio*, the poet, according to the prevailing view I have described, is leaving us to face what is really an insoluble problem, and he is in a position very similar to that of the rhymsters he has formerly ridiculed, who write "non avendo alcuno ragionamento in loro di quello che dicono."⁴⁵ It is a price that we must not pay unless we have to, and it seems all the more unlikely that we shall be so compelled when we consider that, whereas Dante often appears contemptuous of the superficial reader and the unsympathetic critic, in all his works he shows himself solicitous for the patient disciple, eager to provide necessary explanation, and above all anxious to seem consistent. In none of his works do these characteristics appear more clearly than in the *Convivio*, in which the detailed exposition and the painfully logical argumentation regarding the subjects treated are preceded by an introduction — the first book, devoted to explaining the author's purpose and attitude toward his readers — in which he defends his method in a strikingly personal style and makes an explanatory comparison of the present work with the *Vita Nuova*.⁴⁶ Of the two possibilities: that Dante intended to leave us hopelessly mystified, or else that we, for many obvious reasons, have failed to understand an explanation that he has offered us, the second seems to me *a priori* far more probable than the first.

If we turn again to *Convivio* II, 11, hoping for some such explanation, we shall not be disappointed. He says: "... quando quella gentile donna, cui feci menzione ne la fine de la Vita Nuova, parve primamente, accompagnata d'Amore..." With the words "cui feci menzione ne la fine de la Vita Nuova" he is reminding his readers of the end of the *Vita Nuova*, where the first appearance of the "gentile donna" in question was described, and where, still nearer the end of the book, she was ignominiously dismissed from the poet's thoughts. He is now, however, speaking of the time when she first appeared "accompagnata d'Amore." If we refresh our minds by returning to the story in the *Vita Nuova*, and confine our attention to the prose, which gives us the mind of the author when he was composing the book, we shall find it plainly indicated that at that time he had not yet been convinced that the lady was "accompagnata d'Amore."

At the beginning of the episode⁴⁷ the Donna Gentile appeared accompanied by "pietà", or so it seemed "quanto a la vista"; and the sight of her aroused such a corresponding self-pity in the heart of the poet that he was unable to refrain from tears. "Pietà" is not the same as "Amore", but since it is a noble disposition of the mind suitable to entertaining love, pity and other charitable emotions, as Dante tells us in the *Convivio*,⁴⁸ and because of better if less logical reasons, he carried away with him the soothing thought that her evident sympathy was not unmixed with love: "e dicea poi fra me medesimo: E' non puote essere che con quella pietosa donna non sia nobilissimo amore." This thought, however, was not a certain conviction, as appears in the next chapter, where it is said that whenever he chanced to see her there came upon her face the same look of sympathy as before, together with a paleness as if from love: "sì si facea d'una vista pietosa e d'un colore palido quasi come d'amore..."⁴⁹ He then became aware that his eyes were taking an irresponsible

pleasure in looking upon her, which was by no means to his credit; and so he attempted to discipline himself, declaring that it was all nonsense to assume, just because a lady showed him that she too shared his grief for Beatrice, that she was harbouring any personal tenderness for himself.⁵⁰

In chapter xxxviii (xxxix), in which is described the climax of the attraction for the Donna Gentile, a "pensiero" that is recommending the lady argues: "Questa è una donna gentile, bella, giovane e savia, e apparita *forse* per voluntade d'Amore..." The heart, longing to be comforted, is willing to be persuaded: "Lo cuore consentiva in lui, cioè nel suo ragionare." But the poet's better judgement "sì come da la ragione mosso" resists stoutly and objects. Another "pensiero" insists: "Tu vedi che questo è uno spiramento d'Amore che ne reca li disiri d'amore dinanzi...", but is unable to convince the poet, who immediately afterward tells us that the dispute is between the "appetito" of his heart and the "ragione" of his soul. His heart longs to be comforted by the lady, his "desiderio si volge tutto verso lei," but his reason cannot be persuaded that legitimate love is to be found in her, that she is "accompagnata d'Amore." And in the next chapter xxxix (xl), 2, there remains no doubt: the feeling inspired by the Donna Gentile is described as "... lo desiderio a cui sì vilmente s'avea lasciato possedere [lo mio cuore]," and "questo cotale malvagio desiderio."

This is the attitude of the poet toward the lady as it is shown to us in the prose of the *Vita Nuova*, an attitude at first wondering and hesitant, then strongly intrigued, and then definitely hostile. This is the situation of which he is reminding us in *Convivio* II, 11, when he tells us that the "gentile donna" of whom he is now speaking is the same "gentile donna, cui feci menzione ne la fine de la *Vita Nuova*," now that he has, by means of the revolutions of Venus, solemnly dated for us the time — later than the

Vita Nuova — when that lady appeared to him “*accompagnata d'Amore.*”

The partisans of the prevailing view will, however, call my attention to the text which says : “*parve primamente, accompagnata d'Amore, a li occhi miei,*” and they will say that since, in the *Vita Nuova*, it was the eyes of the poet that first befriended the lady, he is here still speaking of the same time as in the *Vita Nuova*, that is, of the first appearance of the lady. The new reading “*parve*” instead of “*apparve,*” as it is in the Oxford edition and in the Barbera edition, may seem to support the objection, and it would be interesting to know for what reason the editor of the *Convivio* preferred “*parve*”. Certainly, if there is manuscript evidence for “*apparve*”, as must be the case, this would seem to be the better reading, because “*apparve ... a li occhi miei*” is a familiar expression which Dante uses elsewhere. In the “*forte imaginazione*” which caused the rejection of the *Donna Gentile*⁵¹ he saw Beatrice “*con quelle vestimenta sanguigne co le quali apparve prima a li occhi miei,*” and it is evident that here “*a li occhi miei*” does not mean that the eyes alone were affected; this latter expression is only a proper, and for Dante an habitual, manner of describing an impressive vision which could not be doubted. And so it is in the passage where Beatrice appears at the beginning of the *Vita Nuova*,⁵² a passage which has a special significance with regard to the question we are discussing:

Nove fiate già appresso lo mio nascimento era tornato lo cielo de la luce quasi a uno medesimo punto, quanto a la sua propria girazione, quando *a li miei occhi apparve prima* la gloriosa donna de la mia mente...

Compare this sentence with the one we are considering:

... la stella di Venere due fiate rivolta era in quello suo cerchio che la fa parere serotina e matutina, secondo diversi tempi, appresso lo trapassamento di quella Bea-

trice ..., quando quella gentile donna, cui feci menzione ne la fine de la Vita Nuova, *apparve primamente* accompagnata d'Amore, *a li occhi miei* e prese luogo alcuno ne la mia mente.

No one, I suppose, will be inclined to think that the resemblance between the two passages is a coincidence; the second is evidently intended to recall the first. Also the following conclusions seem to me almost equally evident: that in the second passage we should read *apparve*, as in the first, and as it is in the Oxford edition, and further that in the second *a li occhi miei* has the same meaning as *a li miei occhi* in the first, and has no particular reference to the dispute between the eyes and the heart in the thirty-seventh chapter of the *Vita Nuova*.

But if the resemblances between the two passages are impressive, the differences are all the more significant. The resemblances are as follows:

In each of the two passages the appearance of a lady is dated by the number of revolutions of a star since a definite date. The sentences "quando a li miei occhi apparve prima" and "quando ... apparve primamente ... a li occhi miei" are almost identical. Lastly, both passages end with a mention of the poet's "mente".

The significant differences are as follows:

In the second passage the expression "apparve primamente" is modified by "accompagnata d'amore," whereas there is no corresponding modification of the expression "apparve prima" in the first. Also, whereas in the first Beatrice is called "la gloriosa donna de la mia mente," in the second it is said of the Donna Gentile that she "prese luogo alcuno ne la mia mente."

The reason for the use of the modifying "accompagnata d'Amore" has already been explained. It is used to indicate that here is being dated, not the first appearance of the *Donna Gentile*, which is referred to in the preceding sentence ("cui feci menzione ne la fine de la Vita Nuova"),

but the time when she first appeared indubitably accompanied by Love.

As for the other difference, it should be noted that vague as the meaning of the word "mente" may seem, there is no question as to what it means in the *Convivio*, for in the second chapter of the third book it is defined accurately. By "mente", we are there told, is meant the reasoning soul as distinguished from the sensitive and vegetative; it is the "ultima e nobilissima parte de l'anima"⁵³ which exercises "la potenza ultima, cioè ragione."⁵⁴ When Beatrice first appeared she took possession of the poet's whole soul,⁵⁵ including all three parts of it,⁵⁶ and love for her was never without the "fedele consiglio de la ragione,"⁵⁷ but the *Donna Gentile*, at her first appearance, aroused nothing but "diletto", "piacere", "appetito" and "desiderio",⁵⁸ which lasted only for "alquanti die contra la costanzia de la ragione":⁵⁹ she did not, at that time, obtain any hold upon the poet's "mente", upon his rational soul. And even when she appears "accompagnata d'Amore," in August 1293, she does not at once capture the whole "mente" of the poet. We are told that on this second appearance of hers she "prese luogo alcuno ne la mia mente," for Beatrice, who from the beginning of the poet's new life had been "donna de la mia mente," still held the innermost fortress, "teneva ancora la rocca de la mia mente."⁶⁰

The two passages we are comparing are, therefore, well designed to be contrasted. They mark with astronomical precision the triumphant appearances of the two ladies. In May 1274 Beatrice appears and at once takes possession of Dante's whole soul, which is from that moment ruled by rational Love. In August 1293 the *Donna Gentile*, who, he is careful to remind us, had appeared to him before, soon after the death of Beatrice, but had been misunderstood by him and rejected, appears with the authority of Love and begins to take the place of Beatrice in his rational mind.

It is only a beginning, but the end is already in sight. After his first general statement, the poet goes on to explain how it happened that, although he had rejected her at first, the Donna Gentile was bound to conquer him at last. « E sì come è ragionato per me ne lo allegato libello, più da sua gentilezza che da mia elezione venne ch'io ad essere suo consentisse... »⁶¹ It was not his choice; he had struggled against her and had rejected her, as is described in the *Vita Nuova*. But, as was also explained in the *Vita Nuova*, she showed herself to be so full of compassion for his widowed life that his eyes had altogether gone over to her side: "chè passionata di tanta misericordia si dimostrava sopra la mia vedovata vita, che li spiriti de li occhi miei a lei si fero massimamente amici."⁶² And so, since his eyes could not be divorced from the sight of her, the compassionate image of the Donna Gentile became so lodged in his imagination that, in spite of his determined resistance and his rejection of her after the first brief struggle, in spite of the revulsion of repentant feeling with which he returned to Beatrice, — that revulsion of feeling during which he probably wrote the *Vita Nuova*, — in the end he capitulated completely, and was, with his full consent, married to that image: "E così fatti, dentro [me] lei poi fero tale, che lo mio beneplacito fu contento a disposarsi a quella imagine."⁶³

"Lo mio beneplacito" means the full consent of the poet, and the marriage to the image of the Donna Gentile recalls that other marriage mentioned in the second chapter of the *Vita Nuova*, when as soon as Beatrice made her appearance Love had become the ruler of his soul, "la quale fu sì tosto a lui disponsata."⁶⁴ Things were very different with the Donna Gentile, for not only had that full consent been withheld during the episode of her first appearance, but even when she appeared "accompagnata d'Amore" Dante's full consent was not immediately yielded to this love.⁶⁵ The new love was now born but it takes some time

for love to be born and grow to its full height, especially when it is opposed by other feelings. The Donna Gentile had gained a foothold in his rational soul but Beatrice still held the citadel, and the battle was not yet won. "Ma però che non subitamente nasce amore e fassi grande e viene perfetto, ecc."⁶⁶ The outcome of the struggle, however, was not doubtful, for the new love was continually gaining strength from the sight of the lady herself: "Però che l'uno era soccorso de la parte [de la vista] dinnanzi continuamente, e l'altro de la parte de la memoria di dietro. E lo soccorso dinanzi ciascuno die cresceva, che far non potea l'altro, ecc."⁶⁷ It was in these circumstances, when the victory of the new love was imminent and certain, that *Voi che intendendo* was written: "E quasi esclamando..., dirizzai la voce mia in quella parte onde procedeva la vittoria del nuovo pensiero, ch'era virtuosissimo sì come virtù celestiale; e cominciai a dire: *Voi che intendendo, ecc.*"⁶⁸ It appears, then, that the canzone was written at the time when the Donna Gentile first appeared to Dante's eyes (that is, convincingly) *accompanied by Love*, and made a place for herself within his rational soul, and not merely in his sensitive soul; at the time when he began to perceive that she could no longer be resisted, and when, as we shall see, he found a means of reconciling his growing love for her with his devotion to the memory of Beatrice. The contents of the poem harmonize with this conclusion, for it is easy to see that it represents a more advanced stage in the love for the living woman than the stage illustrated by both verse and prose in the episode of the *Vita Nuova*. It is addressed to the angelic motors of the heaven of Venus on the rays of which comes the new spirit of love,⁶⁹ so that the lady is admittedly "accompagnata d'Amore." The first six verses of the second stanza,

Suol esser vita de lo cor dolente
un soave penser, che se ne gia
molte fiate a' pie' del nostro Sire,

ove una donna gloriar vedea
 di cui parlava me sì dolcemente
 che l'anima dicea: Io men vo' gire,

seem to be a clear reference to the last sonnet of the *Vita Nuova*: "Oltre la spera che più larga gira." The poet's "anima", which in the *Vita Nuova* stood for his "ragione" in the dispute with his "cuore" representing "appetito", is no longer resisting confidently as it did then, but is now conceding the victory of the new "pensiero", and only still grieving over the defeat of the former love:

L'anima piange, sì *ancor* len dole,
 e dice: "Oh lassa a me, come si fugge
 questo piatoso che m'ha consolata!"⁷⁰

There is no mistaking the triumphant tone of the "spiritel d'amor gentile" which has small patience with the timid "anima", to whom it says:

che tu dirai: "Amor, signor verace,
 ecco l'ancella tua; fa che ti piace."⁷¹

The date determined by the revolutions of Venus, August 1293, is therefore, in all probability, the date of the canzone *Voi che intendendo*, as well as the date when Dante became persuaded of the legitimacy of his love for the Donna Gentile; the *Vita Nuova* was composed before these twin events, namely before August 1293.⁷²

It would seem probable, judging from the account in the *Vita Nuova*, that the first appearance of the Donna Gentile occurred soon after the anniversary of the death of Beatrice, and that the temptation offered by the sympathetic charms of the former lasted for only a very short time. The poet turned away from what seemed to him an unworthy source of comfort, and devoted himself in a glow of ecstatic loyalty to the memory of the dead lady. It is reasonable to suppose that this was the occasion which

determined the composition of the *Vita Nuova*, but at any rate, according to the evidence we have been considering, there came a time, after he had written the book, when the sentiment of devotion to the departed saint began to lose something of its keenness. The image of the compassionate lady, which had not been completely obliterated, revived within him, and because now he saw her frequently the struggle which before had been quickly suppressed began again: an unequal struggle between the charms of the living and the memory of the dead.

It was his self-respect that he was defending in this struggle, for it still seemed shameful to him to accept a substitute for the lady whom he had so extraordinarily celebrated, who had been his guiding light while she lived on earth and would, he had thought, continue to guide and inspire him from her place in heaven. Nevertheless he had long been aware that his love for Beatrice was very different from an earthly human passion. At the time when she had, on earth, withdrawn her salutation from him, his very self-respect had persuaded him to cease from importuning her, and to make up his mind to be content to worship without demanding any correspondence from her, and after her death his feeling for her had become something still more unearthly. It occurred to him now, as it has so often occurred to others in similar circumstances, that, since it is impossible and unnatural to maintain a fully human love for a departed spirit, there should be no inconsistency in accepting natural love for a living woman, while at the same time maintaining one's devotion to the memory of the dead. That he became convinced of this possibility appears plainly in the *Convivio*, where he answers the question: why should the intelligences of the sphere of Venus, who inspire love in human beings, have roused in him love for the *Donna Gentile*, to take the place of the love they had awakened in him for Beatrice ?⁷³

A questa questione si può leggiermente rispondere che lo effetto di costoro è amore, com'è detto; e però che salvare nol possono se non in quelli subietti che sono sottoposti alla loro circolazione, esso transmutano di quella parte che è fuori di loro podestade in quella che v'è dentro, cioè de l'anima partita d'esta vita in quella ch'è in essa.

Accordingly, in the same passage where he announces the advent of the *Donna Gentile* "accompagnata d'Amore," he speaks of Beatrice as "quella Beatrice beata che vive in cielo con li angeli e in terra con la mia anima,"⁷⁴ and ends his argument for the immortality of the soul by saying: "e io così credo, così affermo e così certo sono ad altra vita migliore dopo questa passare, là dove quella gloriosa donna vive de la quale fu l'anima mia innamorata quando contendea...,"⁷⁵ where the last words show that he does not consider that his "anima" is any longer "innamorata" di "quella gloriosa donna."

He was not, therefore, without a rational explanation for his change of heart. The new love that was calling him was the same love that had ruled his soul for Beatrice, transferred now by the heavenly powers which cannot be withstood to the *Donna Gentile*.⁷⁶ As soon as he acknowledged that the latter lady was truly "accompagnata d'Amore," she had gained a foothold in his "mente", his rational soul, and it became certain that she would capture the "rocca de la mia mente" which was still feebly defended. The end of the long struggle was in sight, and his self-respect was intact, as well as his devotion to the memory of Beatrice. All this reasoning he was obliged to recant when, years afterward, he imagined himself in the royally severe presence of Beatrice on the summit of the mountain of Purgatory, but he was not ashamed of it at the time when, in *Convivio* II, 11, he recorded with solemn words the date when he became persuaded of its truth.

Long before this time he had turned for comfort in his mourning to the consolation of Philosophy in Boethius

and Cicero, and at some time during that reading he had first imagined the lady Philosophy of the former as like the Donna Gentile. The "trenta mesi" of *Convivio* II, xii (xiii), 7, which have proved a great difficulty for those who believe that the apparition of the Donna Gentile dated in the *Convivio* is the same as her first appearance, these "trenta mesi" lead us back from August 1293 to February 1291. This latter is apparently the date when Dante began to read Boethius. It may be that his difficult reading of the two Latin authors was still unfinished at the time when he composed the *Vita Nuova*, but "already" at that time (as opposed to the later time when he wrote *Voi che intendendo*) many things ("molte cose") were dawning upon him which became quite clear two and a half years later, after he had pursued his studies by frequenting schools and philosophical conversations. Possibly among these "molte cose" was the significance of the simultaneousness of the offerings of consolation by philosophical science and by the Donna Gentile, a significance which he had not grasped and to which, for obvious reasons, he had attached no importance when he was writing the *Vita Nuova*. However that may be, it seems certain that when he wrote the canzone *Voi che intendendo* he was cherishing the belief that the simultaneous appearance of the two comforters had been no mere coincidence, but that by a providential miracle the Donna Gentile, to whom he was now again being irresistibly drawn, was an incarnation of Philosophy. Whether this belief was a genuine conviction with him or whether it was a fiction that he was glad to entertain does not concern us, for in the latter case it was at any rate a fiction which he accepted as true for himself, just as he had accepted the idea that Beatrice was a miracle, a trinity of trinities. He persuaded himself to identify Philosophy with the Donna Gentile, and that persuasion was either a sop to his conscience, an ally to the rational argument in favour of yielding to the charmer, or else it was a conviction

which contributed powerfully to his final surrender. The two comforters had become one in his imagination.⁷⁷

It is natural, therefore, that, in the *Convivio*, he should explain the lady of *Voi che intendendo* as both literal and allegorical, as both a woman of flesh and blood and as Philosophy. Both explanations were true for him, for although he tells us that the allegorical sense of "le scritture" is "una veritade ascosa sotto bella menzogna,"⁷⁸ and calls his allegorical exposition of this poem "la vera,"⁷⁹ and although his conception of the relation of the two senses to each other has never yet been completely defined, it is quite evident from his allegory of Cato and Marcia in *Convivio* IV, xxviii, where after citing Lucan's account of the facts and turning to expound the allegory he says "E potemo così ritrarre la figura a veritade," that the literal meaning may be historically true; while in the mythical illustration of allegory in *Convivio* II, I, the protagonist is Orpheus who was to him a real person as well as a symbol.⁸⁰ We must conclude, I think, that he held that historical truth is not an essential characteristic of an allegorical narrative, but that the narrative may or may not be literally true in whole or in part, and he says this explicitly where he is comparing the literal with the anagogical sense.⁸¹ On the other hand he evidently considered the "nascosa veritade," the allegorical truth, as more important than any truth which might be expressed literally, and so it is not surprising that when, years after writing the canzone *Voi che intendendo*, he undertook to interpret it, while admitting that the "gentile donna" was the same lady whom he had rejected at the end of the *Vita Nuova*, he should emphatically repeat, in case any doubt should remain in the mind of the reader, that she was at the same time that most beautiful and most honourable daughter of the ruler of the universe whom Pythagoras called Philosophy.⁸²

The belief still held by some that the Donna Gentile is,

even in the *Vita Nuova*, a symbol of Philosophy, which implies that, in that book, Beatrice is also an allegorical figure, is incredible to me, partly because Dante, who makes no secret of the allegorical character of other writings of his, says of three of the four sonnets which concern that lady, that the sense is "manifesto" and plain without exposition, and gives no hint of allegory in his explanation of the fourth. This matter will have to be discussed when we come to consider the character of the whole work. At present it may be said that the theory has not enabled any of its defenders to reconcile the apparent conflict between the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio*. Those who attempt such a reconciliation are obliged to explain that it is not the Donna Gentile or the poet's love for her that is rejected in the *Vita Nuova*, and that the "desiderio malvagio" and the "pensiero" which is there called "avversario de la ragione" are a special quality of that love and an unconfessed thought allied to the thoughts which the poet avows. These explanations are illusions, for it is evident that no thought which recommends Philosophy as a comforter can properly be called an enemy of reason, and that, while no direct reflexion is cast upon the lady, she is nevertheless definitely dismissed from the poet's mind.

But if the Donna Gentile is only a merciful lady of flesh and blood in the *Vita Nuova*, in *Voi che intendendo* she is both that and a symbol of Philosophy; for so, I think, the poet himself tells us. He gives us in the *Convivio* a commentary expounding the literal sense of the poem and another expounding the allegorical sense. We might be allowed to doubt the veracity of the commentary on the literal sense, were it not for *Convivio* II, 11, which is not part of that commentary except in as far as it is an introduction to it. This chapter contains a statement of how the poem came to be written, ending with the first verse "*Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete,*" upon which the commentary begins in the following chapter. Then it makes the

necessary divisions of the poem, *which divisions serve for both the literal and the allegorical comment*, and then comes chapter three which begins the literal explanation with the words: "A più latinamente vedere la sentenza litterale..." Similarly the allegorical commentary is preceded by an introduction — *Convivio* II, XII (XIII) — which contains a statement of the manner in which the allegory came to be imagined, ending with the first verse of the canzone, and propounding the first question to be discussed by the commentary. The divisions already made in *Convivio*, II, II, are referred to, and then comes chapter thirteen which begins the allegorical explanation with the words: « A vedere quello che per lo terzo cielo s'intende... »

It appears, then, that chapters II and XII (XIII) of the second book of the *Convivio* are not parts of the interpretative commentary on *Voi che intendendo*. They are statements of fact intended as introductory to the literal and allegorical commentaries respectively. They contain the necessary "antefatti" as Flamini called them, speaking of the *Commedia*, which "sono o vogliono essere storica verità."⁸³ If we refuse to accept these bona fide statements as historical fact, we are obliged to suspect an attempt to deceive us, but if we do accept them there remain no difficulties or obscurities.⁸⁴

The above digression seemed necessary in order to show that the conclusions we had already reached regarding the date of the *Vita Nuova* are in harmony with a reasonable view of the course of events with which Dante acquaints us. But now let us return to our task of dating the composition of this book of his, remembering that we have decided that the *Vita Nuova* was almost certainly composed between June 1291 and August 1293. Is there any means by which we can define the time in question more accurately, reducing the space between those two dates?

The evidence is becoming more uncertain, and the degree

of probability that we can hope to attain is correspondingly reduced. Nevertheless, in distinguishing between more and less probable conclusions, we still have sufficient light to justify us in taking at least one step farther.

The research of Rajna regarding the times when the effigy of Christ on the kerchief of St. Veronica could be seen at Rome — to worship which relic the pilgrims mentioned in *Vita Nuova* XL (XLI) were going — shows that there were three such times every year: the first Sunday in January, four days during Holy Week, and Ascension Day, which came forty days after Easter.⁸⁵ Ascension Day was the least important of these three times, and attracted fewer pilgrims than the others, but for the feast of Epiphany in January and for the days of Holy Week there was always a great concourse of pilgrims from foreign countries, who came for this special purpose. The milder season of Easter-tide and the fact that in Holy Week the relic could be seen during four days, probably attracted more of these pilgrims than the occasion in January, and it is therefore more likely that Dante is referring to Holy Week when he says: “in quello tempo che molta gente va per vedere quella imagine benedetta la quale Iesu Cristo lasciò a noi per esemplo de la sua bellissima figura...”⁸⁶

V. N. XL (XLI) is the last chapter but two of the book, and the last is only a short paragraph, but it would be impossible to suppose that Dante finished the work about Easter or even near January of the year 1293. For in that case it would have taken him no longer than from three to six months to make up his mind to substitute the Donna Gentile for Beatrice. The ecstatic fervour of the last two chapters is sufficient evidence that a considerably longer time than that must have elapsed before the memory of Beatrice and the spiritual communion with the glory of that blessed lady could become dimmed and intermittent, and before the purpose of writing more worthily of her could be deferred or abandoned. These results could only

be accomplished by time and by constantly increasing intimacy with the other lady. That the conversion was slow is shown by the fact that even when he had come to recognize the authority of the Donna Gentile, that is, that she was truly "accompagnata d'Amore" and destined to be his comforter, the struggle between her and the influence of the old love still continued for some time longer. We must therefore push the date of the conclusion of the *Vita Nuova* at least as far back as Easter or January of 1292.

And if we suppose that the book was finished about Easter of 1292, when are we to think it was begun? It is impossible to estimate how long it would take Dante to write the *Vita Nuova*, but the work is so symmetrically arranged and so carefully planned to lead the mind of the reader along the road which the poet's own mind had travelled from the first appearance of Beatrice in 1274 to the time of writing, that one can be sure it was not composed hurriedly.

It may help us in our conjecturing to recall for a moment that passage in the first book of the *Convivio*, which we have already considered,⁸⁷ where Dante says: "E io in quella dinanzi, [i.e., in the *Vita Nuova*] a l'entrata de la mia gioventute parlai..."⁸⁸ We saw that it is possible to suppose that he is here speaking only of the verse of the *Vita Nuova*, and not of the prose, but that does not seem probable to me. For in the entire passage beginning "E se ne la presente opera, la quale è *Convivio* nominata..., più virilmente si trattasse che ne la *Vita Nuova*..."⁸⁹ he seems to be comparing the whole of the earlier work with the whole of the later, and explaining that the reason why the former is "fervida e passionata" while the latter is "temperata e virile" is that the former was written when he was much younger than he was when he wrote the latter. And the prose of the *Vita Nuova* is just as "fervida e passionata" as the verse: one has only to recall the descrip-

tion of the effect on Dante of the first appearance of Beatrice,⁸⁰ the description of the effect of her salutation,⁸¹ the story of his conflicting emotions after the denial of her greeting and of the fainting fit caused by her mockery.⁸² We saw, too, that "a l'entrata de la mia gioventute" might be understood to mean *during my adolescence*, since adolescence is said, in the fourth book, to be the gateway of youth, but this also seems unlikely to me. If Dante had said *ne l'entrata* one could not quarrel with that interpretation, but the preposition *a* seems to indicate a more restricted division of time, and certainly the more obvious meaning would be "at the entrance into youth," that is, "at the beginning of my *gioventute*."

Making allowance for Dante's intentional vagueness in delimiting "adolescenzia" and "gioventute", it is clear that he means that adolescence is a period of about twenty-five years. He tells us, however, that it may be more or less than twenty-five years,⁸³ and so, if the poet is referring to the composition of the *Vita Nuova* and not only to the verse, and if "a l'entrata" means *at the beginning*, then "a l'entrata de la mia gioventute" may mean either exactly at the beginning of his twenty-sixth year, May 1290, or at some time earlier or later than that date. Now it is impossible to suppose that Dante began to write as early as May 1290, for the *Vita Nuova* was evidently not begun until after the death of Beatrice, and it is highly improbable that he began to write before June 1291, for the anniversary of the death of Beatrice is mentioned as early as *Vita Nuova xxxiv (xxxv)*.

There is one other possibility which seems to me exceedingly probable. The first year of any of the divisions of life, "adolescenzia", "gioventute", "senettute", might very reasonably be thought of as the *beginning of* or the *entrance into* that division, and the first year of Dante's "gioventute" was either between May 1290 and May 1291 or — if his "adolescenzia" be reckoned as lasting for say a

possible six months longer than the end of his twenty-fifth year — anywhere between November 1290 and November 1291. It seems probable to me that Dante's statement means that he began to compose the book not long after June 1291.

Giovanni Boccaccio says: "Egli primieramente, durante ancora le lagrime della morte della sua Beatrice, quasi nel suo ventesimosesto anno compose in un volumetto, il quale egli intitolò *Vita Nuova*, certe operette..."⁹⁴ It is impossible to suppose that "quasi nel suo ventesimosesto anno" means *when he had almost reached his twenty-sixth year*, for Dante's twenty-fifth year ended in 1290, the year of the death of Beatrice, according to Boccaccio's own account.⁹⁵ Nor is it probable that the sentence means *partly in his twenty-sixth and partly in his twenty-seventh year*, for that would imply that the *Vita Nuova* had been begun before the anniversary of the death of Beatrice, which, as Boccaccio well knew, is mentioned in chapter xxxiv. The only probable meaning is: 'when he was little more than twenty-six years old', and that is the same thing as saying: 'in his twenty-seventh year'.

But if that is Boccaccio's meaning, why did he not say straight-forwardly *ne l'anno suo ventesimosettimo*? I think the context explains it. The preceding words are "durante ancora le lagrime della morte della sua Beatrice"; Dante's twenty-sixth year, May 1290-May 1291, almost coincides with the year after the death of Beatrice, and the biographer is emphasising the fact that the *Vita Nuova* was composed when Dante had not yet ceased to mourn her. It may be that he was influenced by Dante's own words in the *Convivio*, "a l'entrata de la mia gioventute" and therefore placed the date of the *Vita Nuova* as near as possible to the end of the poet's twenty-fifth year. If so Boccaccio's testimony would not be that of an independent witness, but would still have some value, for it would show that he interpreted the words of Dante as we

have interpreted them and was led to the same conclusion as we. And, since in that case he did not reach his conclusion without reflection, as is shown by his guarded statement "quasi nel suo ventesimosesto anno," but was aware of the difficulty of interpreting Dante's sentence, it is reasonable to suppose that he would use any other information that might be available for confirming or correcting his interpretation. He had better opportunities for collecting information than any other writer has since had. Many aspersions have in modern times been cast upon his reliability, but, in spite of his inclination to fine writing, he has never been convicted of inventing a fact or a date. If he does not refrain from recounting the prophetic dream of Dante's mother, it is probably because that was a tradition which at any rate could not be confuted, and if, a propos of his author's marriage, he allows himself a tirade against the evils of matrimony, he is careful to add that he knows nothing about Dante's matrimonial experience.⁹⁶ The credibility of his statements regarding the youth of Dante is supported also by Barbi's discovery that in Boccaccio's own home lived a second cousin and contemporary of Bice Portinari, who may have been the "fededegna persona" closely related to her, whom the biographer mentions as one of his informants.⁹⁷

Boccaccio's statement means that the *Vita Nuova* was composed, for the most part, during the author's twenty-seventh year, which ended in May 1292, and so his testimony agrees with the probability already deduced that the pilgrimage to the *Veronica* of chapter XL (XLI) belongs to Easter of that year. The pilgrims would, of course, be passing through Florence on their way to Rome before Holy Week, which fell, that year, very early in April.⁹⁸

The *Vita Nuova* was almost certainly composed between June 1291 and August 1293; it was probably begun not long after June 1291 and ended by May 1292 or soon after.

NOTES

1, p. 1. — For the state of opinion toward the end of the last century regarding the date of the *Vita Nuova*, see Kraus, 208-10. The favourite dates were: 1292, based chiefly on a rather free interpretation of Boccaccio's testimony and Dante's statement in *Conv.* I, i, 17 (cf., e. g., D'Ovidio 2, Vol. V, pp. 3-41), and 1300, because this is the year of the other-world journey, and the "mirabile visione" of V.N. XLII (XLIII) was thought to be identical with the subject of the *Comedia* or part of it, and because the passage of the pilgrims in V.N. XL (XLI) was thought to belong to the jubilee of 1300 (cf., e.g., D'Ancona, ed. xiv-xvi, xviii-xix, and 167). None of the years, however, between 1292 and 1296 lacked a defender (cf., e.g., Casini, ed. xvii-xx, where 1294-1295 is preferred). All the sources of information familiar to us were used, and the different conclusions reflected different interpretations of the passages in the *Convivio* concerned, and different views as to the relation of the *Vita Nuova* to the *Convivio* and the *Comedia*.

/ Nowadays the diversity of opinion is even greater, and the dates assigned to the book vary from 1291 to 1312. Those for whom the *Vita Nuova* presupposes that its author already has in mind an important part of the *Convivio* or the *Comedia*, or both, incline of course to prefer a late date; those, on the other hand, who believe that it is a youthful work, not presupposing either of the other two, prefer an early one.

2, p. 2. — Parodi, 369.

3, p. 2. — Parodi, *ibid.*

4, p. 2. — Cf. Moore, 123-24, and in *BSDIt.* II, 57-58; Toynbee 1, 54-57; Del Lungo 2, p. 100, and in *BSDIt.* II, 58; Zingarelli, 712, n. 121. Del Lungo quotes Professor Fausto Lasinio as follows: "L'anno 689 arabo cominciò nel 14 gennaio 1290 di Cristo. Il mese Glumâdâ secondo del 689 arabo, che corrisponde ai nostri giugno-luglio 1290, fu il mese sesto arabico, che in quell' anno 689 principiò il dì 11 giugno." If Dante knew all this, he may mean that Beatrice died in the evening of June 19, according to our reckoning. If, however, he knew no more about the Arabic calendar than Alfraganus imparts, including the fact that the Arabic day began at sunset, he must mean that she died in the evening of June 8. The second alternative seems the more probable. Cf. Barbi in *BSDIt.* XI, 10, n. 3.

5, p. 2. — Del Lungo 1, Vol. II, p. 98, n. 26.

6, p. 2. — V.N. xxx (xxx1), 3 contains the dedication of the work: *E simile intenzione so ch'ebbe questo mio amico a cui io ciò scrivo, cioè ch'io li scrivessi solamente volgare.* Bartoli (IV, 212) was inclined to think that the past tense *ebbe* indicates that Guido was dead at the time of writing, and the apparent conflict which would thus arise with V.N. xxv, 10 where Guido has been mentioned as alive, suggested to him that the V.N. may have undergone a reworking. He did not mention V.N. xxxii (xxxiii), 1, which also implies that Guido is still alive. Pietrobono (I, 104-05)

sees in the form *ebbe* a slip made by Dante when he was re-writing this chapter after the death of Guido, but examples of absent-mindedness in Dante are more than rare and should not be assumed. The past tense is easily explicable as referring to the time when the author, on deciding to compose the book, consulted his friend as to whether the prose should be written in Latin or Italian, and it corresponds exactly to the past tense *fue* in the preceding sentence, used with regard to the intention of Dante himself: "...lo intendimento mio non *fue* dal principio di scrivere altro che per volgare..." *V.N.* xxx (xxx1), 2.

7, p. 2. — Rajna, "Per la data della Vita Nuova," ecc., in *GSLit.* IV (1885), 113-56, especially 153-56. Cf. also Barbi, ed. 98, n. 18, where the manuscript evidence in favour of the reading *va* instead of *andava* is shown to be overwhelming.

8, p. 3. — Discussions of the general character of the *Vita Nuova* may be more or less persuasive, but they cannot lead to any definite conclusion as to its dates. For example, the arguments of Federzoni (1, 50-75, and 2, 15-30; cf. also his *Vita di Beatrice Portinari*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1905) to show that the book is mature and not youthful, and that it has much in common with the *Commedia*, may be more persuasive to others than they are to me, but at best they can only incline one favourably to the date (1300) which he advocates.

9, p. 3. — *Conv.* I, 1, 16-17.

10, p. 3. — Parodi in *BSDIt.* XXII, 267.

11, p. 4. — *Conv.* II, viii (ix), 4. — Santangelo (124), arguing that "dinanzi" ought to be taken with "a l'entrata" and not with "quella", says: "Se infatti Dante, nel passo riportato, per ben tre volte si riferisce alla *Vita Nuova* e al *Convivio* rispettivamente coi pronomi *quella* e *questa*, non poteva la quarta volta sentire il bisogno di dire 'quella dinanzi' e 'questa dipoi'." The answer is that "quella" and "questa" serve quite well to distinguish the two works so long as no mention is made of the different times at which they were written, but after the statement that "certi costumi sono idonei e laudabili ad una etade che sono sconci e biasimevoli ad altra" it is reasonable and clearer to refer to the earlier work as "quella dinanzi" and to the later as "questa dipoi". So in *Conv.* II, viii (ix), 4, "quello di prima" is used to designate the earlier love and "questo di poi" the later love which superceded it. Cf. also Beck in *ZRPh.* XLV, 32.

12, p. 4. — "Veramente..., queste etadi possono essere più lunghe e più corte secondo la complessione nostra e la composizione; ma, come elle siano, in questa proporzione, come detto è, [in tutti si truovano, e questo] in tutti mi pare di servire, cioè di fare l'etadi in quelli cotali e più lunghe e meno, secondo la integritade di tutto lo tempo de la naturale vita." *Conv.* IV, xxiv, 7.

13, p. 4. — *Conv.* IV, xxiv, 2 and 4.

14, p. 4. — Cf. Parodi in *BSDIt.* XXII, 267; Federzoni 2, 13; Santangelo, 124.

15, p. 4. — Only a few lines before this passage occur the words: "La vivanda di questo convivio sarà di quattordici maniere ordinata, cioè quattordici canzoni..." *Conv.* I, 1, 14. — I do not

entertain the suggestion that "quella già trapassata" may refer to "entrata" instead of to "gioventute" (cf. D'Ovidio 2, Vol. V, pp. 22-23), for two reasons: first (as Chistoni noted, pp. 11-12), it would be ridiculous for a man at least in his fortieth year to say that he had already passed the beginning of his youth, when he has just reminded us that youth begins about the twenty-fifth year; secondly, the expression "già trapassata" balances the expression "a l'entrata de", and since the former modifies "quella" and the latter "la mia gioventude," "quella" can refer to nothing but "la mia gioventude."

16, p. 5. — *Conv.* IV, xxiv, 9 and 10.

17, p. 5. — Cf. *Conv.* II, ii, 1: "...appresso lo trapassamento di quella Beatrice beata..."

18, p. 5. — *Conv.* II, xii (xiii), 1-4.

19, p. 6. — Cf. Barbi in *BSDIt.* X, 318, whose opinion that *già* means *ormai* seems to have been anticipated by Lumini in *GD.* II (1895), p. 377.

20, p. 7. — *Conv.* II, xii (xiii), 5-9.

21, p. 7. — To consider here the relation of this whole passage to the account of the writing of *Voi che intendendo* in *Conv.* II, ii, and to the episode of the Donna Gentile in the *Vita Nuova*, would be to obscure the otherwise obvious conclusion I am about to indicate.

22, p. 8. — Cf. Parodi in *BSDIt.* XXI, 22: "La canz. *Voi che intendendo* comincia un nuovo periodo..., quello delle rime allegoriche (e ce ne assicura anche il sonetto *Parole mie*); dunque è idealmente posteriore a tutta la *Vita Nuova* nel suo insieme di prosa e poesia. Ma come si potrebbe immaginare senza stravaganza che non sia stata posteriore anche di fatto, se ne nega tutto lo spirito, negandone uno dei dati essenziali, che l'amore di Beatrice riuscì vittorioso di quello più o meno filosofico per la donna gentile?"

Zappia, after asserting (357-58) that "Dante... vuole che il periodo degli amori filosofici sia adombrato nell'episodio della donna gentile della *Vita Nuova*...", continues (358): "Le parole dell'opera temperata e virile, intese con discrezione, non dicono altro che questo: che, prima degli studi filosofici (quindi prima della morte di Beatrice), non già prima della composizione della *Vita Nuova*, Dante vedea vagamente, quasi come sognando, certe verità, che poi, leggendo Cicerone e Boezio, vide ad occhi aperti. Se dunque egli dice, che nella *Vita Nuova* si possono vedere codeste verità sognate prima della morte di Beatrice, bisogna intendere ch'ei si riferisce alle rime della *Vita Nuova* anteriori all'episodio della donna gentile..." He has already made up his mind, first, that Dante wishes us to believe that the *Donna Gentile* was nothing but a symbol in the *Vita Nuova*; secondly, that "già" means 'before this time'; thirdly, that as soon as the poet began to read Boethius and Cicero all things became clear to him which before had been obscure, whereas Dante says that after much difficulty "finalmente" he began to understand the Latin authors to some extent. The first assumption is, as we shall see, as unfounded as the other two, and but for the three Zappia would not have been led to restrict the meaning of "ne la *Vita Nuova*" to part of the verses in

that book, a restriction which robs the phrase of all force. On the basis of those three assumptions he might more reasonably have been led to the paradoxical conclusion that the whole of the *Vita Nuova* was written before the death of Beatrice.

23, p. 8. — *Par.* VIII, 37 and 55-57.

24, p. 8. — Cf. Mandalari, 210.

25, p. 8. — De Labusquette (690, n. 1) says that the argument that *Voi che intendendo* must have been written before the death of Carlo Martello "manque de rigueur." However the verse "Assai m'amasti, e avesti ben onde" (*Par.* VIII, 55) with its past tenses, is sufficient proof that the king is reminding Dante of their friendship on earth, and that this friendship is not a critic's dream, as Angeletti (14-15) declared it to be. There has never been any suspicion that Buonaggiunta and Casella, who also quote Dante's poems to him (*Purg.* XXIV, 51 and II, 112), have not known those poems during their life-time. The possibility that Charles may have become acquainted with this canzone after his death is, generally speaking, the resource of persons who, on mistaken grounds, have already concluded that *Voi che intendendo* must have been written later than 1295. It is probable that he first read the poem in the spring of 1294, when he was in Florence for more than three weeks, or else in the autumn, when Dante may have been a member of the Florentine mission to the Angevin court at Naples, but there is no evidence that the canzone was not sent to him at some other time.

26, p. 9. — Ma però che de la immortalità de l'anima è qui toccato, farò una digressione, ragionando di quella; perchè, di quella ragionando, sarà bello terminare lo parlare di quella viva Beatrice beata, de la quale più parlare in questo libro non intendo per proponimento. *Conv.* II, VIII (IX), 7.

Qui si vuole bene attendere ad alcuna moralitate: che non dee l'uomo, per maggiore amico, dimenticare li servigi ricevuti dal minore; ma se pur seguire si conviene l'uno e lasciar l'altro, lo migliore è da seguire, con alcuna onesta lamentanza l'altro abbandonando, ne la quale dà cagione, a quello che segue, di più amore. *Conv.* II, xv (xvi), 6.

27, p. 9. — Petrobono, Vol. I, 101-24.

28, p. 10. — Petrobono, Vol. I, 109.

29, p. 10. — Ortiz, 17-18.

30, p. 11. — From 1293 to 1308; cf. Petrobono. Vol. I, 109.

31, p. 11. — The theory that the *Vita Nuova* underwent a reworking long after it was first composed is by no means new. It was propounded by Witte (1, 8-9) for reasons in part identical with those of Petrobono and Ortiz. Cf. also Witte, 2. Vol. I, 181-82, where the theory is modified. It was suggested tentatively by Bartoli (Vol. IV, 212).

32, p. 12. — *Conv.* II, v (vi), 16.

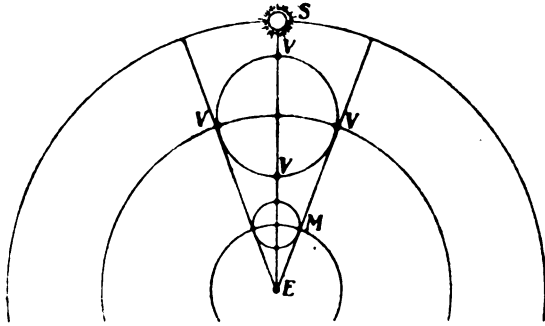
33, p. 12. — Not "movimenti dei cieli", as Toynbee says in *Ro.* XXIV (1895), 421, for the heaven of Venus is the only one in question.

34, p. 12. — Alfraganus, p. 124, cap. xiv.

35, p. 12. — *Conv.* II, v (vi), 17.

36, p. 12. — Alfraganus, pp. 121-22, cap. xiv. "Et iterum centrum orbis revolutionis cuiusque duorum scilicet Veneris et Mercurii simul iungitur soli per medium cursum et currit cursu eius. Opportet ergo interea ut sit unusquisque eorum, cum est in longitudine longiori aut propinquiore orbis revolutionis, coniunctus soli per medium cursum; et cum est ab utroque latere super duo loca duarum linearum contingentium quae egrediuntur a terra ad ambo latera orbis revolutionis sit in ultima longitudine a sole. Centrum autem orbis revolutionis cuiusque trium scilicet Saturni Jovis et Martis est tardioris cursus quam sol..."

The following diagram will serve for illustration :



37, p. 13. — That the centres of the epicycles of Venus and Mercury do revolve about the Earth in the same period as the Sun is explicitly stated by Alfraganus, p. 131, cap. xvii, where he says: « Revolutiones autem orbium egredientium centrorum... Sunt ita: Lunae quidem revolutio in 27 fit diebus et 7 horis et 2^a et 5^a horae fere; unusquisque autem horum scilicet Mercurius et Venus et Sol in 365 diebus et 4^a fere."

38, p. 13. — If "secondo diversi tempi" is the correct reading, this expression may mean "according to the different phases of the epicycle," that is, the times when the planet is "direct" and "retrograde", and when it is to the east and to the west of the Sun. If the correct reading is that of the Oxford Dante: "secondo i due diversi tempi," the "two different times" are probably: 1) the time between the two points of greatest brilliance, in the lower part of the epicycle; 2) the time of comparative obscurity spent in the upper part of the epicycle. Cf. Lorenzoni, 6-10.

The phrase "diversi tempi" is the "diversitas secundum tempus" of Alfraganus. Cf. Alfraganus 160-61, cap. xxvi; and 106, cap. xi. 39, p. 13. — Alfraganus, 131, cap. xvii.

40, p. 13. — Alfraganus, p. 59, cap. i. "Menses autem persarum sunt... numerus quidem dierum cuiusque mensis eorum est 30 et invenitur inter ebenmeh et idrameh 5 dies sunt ergo dies anni 365."

41, p. 13. — Alfraganus, p. 124, cap. xiv.

42, p. 14. — Cf. Lubin in *Pro*, n.s., Vol. V (1892), Part I,

pp. 5-85, where the whole matter is clearly explained according to the Ptolemaic system, with quotations from the *Almagest*, and where light is shed on the nature of the mistake made by Carpenter (*RDS*. VIII, 1889, 57-59 and 78-79). The latter, to whom both the *Almagest* and the work of Alfraganus were apparently inaccessible, was misled by a passage in Narrien (242-43), and by another in Delambre (313-14).

Ptolemy had set down the revolution of Venus about the Earth as occurring in the same time as that of the Sun, that is, one revolution in about 365 days, at a mean speed of about $0^{\circ}, 59'$, per day. He accounted for the varying distance of the planet in longitude by means of two eccentric circles, one of which was the deferent that bears the centre of the epicycle. He also observed the synodical revolution of Venus about the Sun — irrespective of the revolution about the Earth, just mentioned — and found that it occurred once in about 584 days, at a mean speed of about $0^{\circ}, 37'$ per day. He accounted for this movement by means of the epicycle, the centre of which travels upon the deferent. Narrien pointed out that, during her journey about the Earth on epicycle and deferent, Venus would return to the same position with regard to the fixed stars (not with regard to the Sun) once every 225 days, and Delambre pointed out that if the daily rate of speed of Venus in the epicycle, $0^{\circ}, 37'$, be added to the daily rate of speed of the Sun (which is the same as that of the deferent of Venus), $0^{\circ}, 59'$, and the sum, $1^{\circ}, 36'$, be the daily rate of speed of the planet, Venus will then revolve through 360° in 225 days, which is the period in which Venus actually revolves about the Sun according to our modern knowledge. Carpenter evidently thought that Narrien and Delambre were reporting something which Ptolemy had said, but Ptolemy says nothing about these facts — which are only two aspects of the same fact — and neither does Alfraganus, nor, as far as is known, does any other astronomer before the time of Dante.

The ancient astronomers could not have been unaware of the facts mentioned by Narrien and Delambre, and if they say nothing of this period of 225 days, which is so interesting to the modern mind, it is probably because it had no particular significance for them. Had the matter been quite clear to Ptolemy, and had he pondered it sufficiently, he might have been led to discard the epicycle of Venus, and present her with a simple orbit revolving about the Earth once in 225 days. He would never in any case have attributed this period to the revolution in the epicycle, for the epicycle had been devised to account for the irregularity of Venus with regard to the Sun, while the eccentrics were intended to account for the irregularity with regard to the fixed stars. (Cf. Delambre, 314-15.) And although it could have been observed that after 225 days Venus returned to a previous position with regard to the fixed stars, she could not be said to have completed a revolution in the epicycle in that time. The revolution in the epicycle had been accurately observed: it took place in the period between the appearance of Venus at her extreme elongation on one side of the Sun and her return to the same point with regard

to the Sun, and this period is, according to both ancients and moderns, 584 days. Cf. Lorenzoni, 6-10; Orr, 314-15, 142-43, and 151; Ptolemy, Vol. II, 121-24; 145-49: 156-63; 208. A good explanation of the function of the epicycle is given by H. Spencer Toy in the periodical *Discovery* (London, Murray), Vol. III, no. 36, December 1922, 328-30. Chistoni (21-39), misunderstanding the whole question, thought that the eccentric deferent is the circle meant by Dante. See the review by Barbi in *BSDIt.* X, 314-16.

Following a suggestion of Torraca, in *BSDIt.* II, 198, some scholars have resorted to the following lines in Jacopo Alighieri's *Dottrinale* (146):

Venus in septe mesi
et nove di compresi
il suo epiciclo agira.

Chistoni suggested (37) that these seven months and nine days are the seven months and nine days given by Alfraganus, with the latter's "anno persico" left out, and that Jacopo may have misunderstood Alfraganus to mean that a "Persian year" is equivalent to seven months and nine days. Zappia (71-72) and De Labusquette (729-30) were of this opinion too, and thought that Dante might have made the same mistake. Apart, however, from the fact that Alfraganus says distinctly (59) that a Persian year has 365 days, the periods given for the epicycles of the planets by Jacopo are strikingly different from those given by Alfraganus, with the exception of Mercury and Mars. For the moon, Jacopo gives 19 years, Alfraganus, 27 days and 13 hours; for Jupiter, Jacopo 2 years, 10 months and 16 days, Alfraganus 1 year, 1 month, 4 days; for Saturn, Jacopo 23 years, Alfraganus 1 year and 13 days. It seems, therefore, very unlikely that Jacopo was drawing on Alfraganus for his information. To me it seems more than probable that Jacopo attempted to deduce a period of revolution for the epicycle with regard to a fixed direction, by subtracting 365 days (the period of the deferent of Venus) from 584 days (the period of the epicycle with regard to the Sun). He thus obtained 219 days, which are exactly seven months and nine days. If so, his obtaining this result confirms the belief that there was no tradition of a 225 day period for him to follow. Original as Jacopo seems to have been, he is at all events a thoroughly unreliable representative of his father's opinions. He insists on presenting the sun with an epicycle (36-37), whereas it is evident that for Dante the sun had none (Cf. *Conv.* III, v), any more than it had for Ptolemy or Alfraganus. Jacopo, too, has little respect for Aristotle, and declares that the heat of the sphere of fire spreads upward through the moving heavens (35-36). He believes, too, that "Paradiso" is in the heaven of fixed stars (151).

43, p. 16. — *La questione di Lisetta* in *StD.* I, 34.

44, p. 16. — *Zonta*, 112, n. 1.

45, p. 16. — *V. N.* xxv, 10.

46, p. 16. — *Conv.* I, i, 16 and 17.

47, p. 17. — *V. N.* xxxv (xxxvi).

48, p. 17. — *Conv.* II, x (xi), 6: "ma pietade non è passione, anzi è una nobile disposizione d'animo, apparecchiata di ricevere amore, misericordia e altre caritative passioni."

49, p. 17. — *V.N.* xxxvi (xxxvii), 1.

50, p. 18. — *V.N.* xxxvii (xxxviii), 2: "...questa donna...; non mira voi, se non in quanto le pesa de la gloriosa donna di cui piangere solete..."

51, p. 19. — *V.N.* xxxix (xi), 1.

52, p. 19. — *V.N.* ii (i), 1.

53, p. 21. — *Conv.* III, ii, 16.

54, p. 21. — *Conv.* III, ii, 14.

55, p. 21. — *N.V.* ii (i), 7: "D'allora innanzi dico che Amore segnoreggiò la mia anima, la quale fu sì tosto a lui dispensata..."

56, p. 21. — *V.N.* ii (i), 4-6.

57, p. 21. — *V.N.* ii (i), 9.

58, p. 21. — *V.N.* xxxvii (xxxviii), 1; xxxviii (xxxix), 1, 5, 6, 7; xxxix (xl), 2.

59, p. 21. — It should be remembered that, according to the sonnet *Amore e'l cor gentil* (*V.N.* xx, 5), pleasure and desire must endure in order to arouse Love: "...dentro al core — nasce un disio de la cosa piacente; — e tanto dura talor in costui, — che fa svegliar lo spirito d'Amore."

60, p. 21. — *Conv.* II, ii, 3.

61, p. 22. — *Conv.* II, ii, 2.

62, p. 22. — *Conv.*, *ibid.*

63, p. 22. — *Conv.*, *ibid.*

64, p. 22. — *V.N.* ii (i), 7.

65, p. 22. — *Conv.* III, ii, 9: "Questo amore, cioè l'unimento de la mia anima con questa gentil donna..."

66, p. 23. — *Conv.* II, ii, 3.

67, p. 23. — *Conv.* II, ii, 4.

68, p. 23. — *Conv.* II, ii, 5. The whole passage (*Conv.* II, ii, 1-5) is an account of how the canzone *Voi che intendendo* came to be written. It consists of three parts, of which the first (1) contains the announcement that in August 1293 Dante began to capitulate to that Donna Gentile whom he had previously rejected, as was told in the "fine de la Vita Nuova." The third part (3-5), "ma però che, ecc.", describes the circumstances in which *Voi che intendendo* was written. The second part (2), "E si come è ragionato, ecc.", is parenthetical. It is introduced in the middle of the passage to explain, by referring again to the "allegato libello," how he had been so won over by the kindness and pity of the lady, that, in spite of the rejection (which he does not mention explicitly because it was a temporary incident which he does not care to dwell on), the impression made upon him by her triumphed completely in the end.

It should be noticed, however, that this parenthetical part is not introduced in any artificial way. Its position is logical, and its relation to the preceding and following sentences is natural. After having mentioned the "fine de la Vita Nuova" in the first part, it was inevitable that some explanation should be added; and after having said, at the end of the second part, that "lo mio

beneplacito fu contento a disposarsi a quella imagine," it was necessary to say, as the first words of the third part do, that this did not happen at once, but that *Voi che intendendo* was born in the emotional crisis "prima che questo amore fosse perfetto."

69, p. 23. — Verses 12-13: "...un spirto... che vien pe'raggi de la vostra stella."

70, p. 24. — Verses 30-32.

71, p. 24. — Verses 42 and 51-52. Compare the much less confident tone of the "gentil pensiero che parla di vui" in *V.N.* xxxviii (xxxix), which does not dare to address the "anima" directly, but is content with persuading the "core". And the heart in its turn is apologetic in the explanation it offers to the "anima".

72, p. 24. — Guerri (ed. 175-76, n. 2), who also prefers the reading *apparve* to *parve* in *Conv.* II, II, 1, takes a view which seems to be identical with mine (cf. Shaw in *MLR.* X (1915) 129-49 and 320-37), that is, he believes that the apparition of the Donna Gentile "accompagnata d'Amore" belongs to 1293, whereas that described in the *Vita Nuova* belongs to 1291, and that in this way the apparent contradiction between the two accounts vanishes. His words are: "...l'episodio della pietosa nella *V.N.* pare svolgersi subito dopo l'annuale della morte di Beatrice e durar poco, mentre qui la sua apparizione amorosa è posta a tre anni compiuti di distanza. Inoltre nella *V.N.* questo amore è condannato dalla ragione e qui invece trionfa. Credo che molto si spieghi con la supposizione di un ritorno, la quale ci consente di passare dalla narrazione della *V.N.* a questa del *Conv.* senza essere indiscreti verso il poeta di domande che rimarrebbero senza risposta. Del resto il lettore attento può osservare che in questa prosa la *menzione* della pietosa è sì riferita alla *V.N.*, ma 'la prima apparizione in compagnia di Amore' (si noti la limitazione), è invece da ricollegarsi con la data qui assegnatale." It is a great satisfaction to me to be no longer alone in maintaining this view, which is, I feel sure, destined to prevail.

Petrobono notes (Vol. I, 125) that the words "apparve primamente *accompagnata d'amore*" indicate that Dante had known the Donna Gentile before she thus appeared to him, but he still believes that the apparition mentioned in *Conv.* II, II, is the same as that described in the *Vita Nuova*.

73, p. 25. — *Conv.* II, VIII (IX), 4-6.

74, p. 26. — *Conv.* II, II, 1.

75, p. 26. — *Conv.* II, VIII (IX), 16.

76, p. 26. — As Dante wrote, during his exile, to his friend Cino, in the sonnet: *Io sono stato con Amore insieme — da la circolazion del sol mia nona*: "Ben può con nuovi spron punger lo fianco, — e qual che sia 'l piacer ch'ora n'addestra, — seguitar si convien, se l'altro è stanco."

77, p. 28. — Cf. Chistoni, 216-17: "L'identità dell'ufficio, per così dire, produsse da principio una parziale compenetrazione e più tardi una fusione di quelle figure misericordiose..." Ortiz, who believes that Dante is capable of deceiving his readers, says (pp. 41-42): "Ci sono dei momenti nei quali direste che Dante è finalmente arrivato a persuadersi e persuaderci che i due amori per la donna

pietosa e bella e per le attrattive magiche della scienza e della filosofia non sono che un solo amore. E che maravigliosi versi, internamente impressi della calma e della gioia di aver ritrovato la pace escono allora dalle sue labbra!" Of course, for Dante had really found peace in accepting the love of the lady on rational grounds, and exaltation in thinking of her as the symbol of Philosophy.

78, p. 28. — *Conv.* II, i, 3.

79, p. 28. — *Conv.* II, xii (xiii), 1.

80, p. 28. — *Cf. Inferno*, iv, 140.

81, p. 28. — ...e questo è quando spiritualmente si spone una scrittura, la quale ancora [sia vera] eziandio nel senso letterale, per le cose significate significa de le superne cose de l'eternal gloria... *Conv.* II, i, 6.

82, p. 28. — *Conv.* II, xv (xvi), 12. Todeschini, who despaired of reconciling the apparently conflicting accounts in the *Vita Nuova* and *Convivio*, nevertheless felt sure that the literal interpretation of *Voi che intendendo* is just as true as the allegorical. He says (318-19): "...il fatto è che, nello sporre la lettera e l'allegoria della canzone il poeta ci narra due storie diverse, l'una amorosa, l'altra letteraria, che sono ambidue verissime: che nella vita di lui si compenetrarono in un solo corso di eventi, ma che nella forma in cui ci vengono da esso presentate rimangono scompagnate e distinte per modo che i fatti ed i tempi dell'una si staccano compiutamente da' fatti e da' tempi dell'altra." *Cf.* Rieger in *NGW Gött.* 1899, Heft A, pp. 463-73, Scartaz. 211, Zonta, ed. 84, n. 53.

Dante's comment on verses 85-86 of *Amor che ne la mente*, "...si che mi par fero — quantunqu'io veggio là 'v'ella mi senta," is: "E non senza cagione dico: là 'v'ella mi senta, e non là dov'io la senta; ma in ciò voglio dare a intendere la grande virtù che l, suoi occhi aveano sopra me: chè, come s'io fosse stato [vetro] così per ogni lato mi passava lo raggio loro." (*Conv.* III, x, 4). He has already explained (*Conv.* III, x, 2-3) that, in the presence of the lady, his passion became unreasonably violent, so that her dignity seemed disdainful and terrible; "e secondo questo cotale sensuale giudicio parlò quella ballatetta." He means by "là 'v'ella mi senta" that it was when she became aware of the violence of his passion that she became dignified and terrible in his eyes. Jackson (tr. 18) says that, in the allegorical exposition (*Conv.* III, xv, 19-20), Dante "implies that his mistress in the literal sense was compassionate and was disdainful only in the figurative sense, thus plainly indicating the reality of the former." His conclusion is correct for other reasons, but both the literal and the allegorical commentaries explain that the lady, though apparently disdainful, was really not so, and, in the passage referred to, Dante is only saying that the allegorical meaning of the "tornata" is suggested by the literal except in this part which needs to be expounded.

83, p. 30. — Flamini, Vol. I, 50.

84, p. 30. — The question of the significance of the Donna Gentile in the *Vita Nuova*, the *Convivio*, and the *Commedia* is an important part of three great problems: 1) the allegorical or non-allegorical character of the *Vita Nuova*; 2) the nature of the aberration

tion of Dante for which he is rebuked by Beatrice in *Purg.* xxx and xxxi; 3) the apparent conflict between the narratives of *Conv.* II and III on the one hand, and the *Vita Nuova* on the other.

The first of these problems will have to be considered in the essay on the Character of the *Vita Nuova*, which closes this book. In the present essay I have taken the ground that in the *Vita Nuova* the Donna Gentile is a real woman, not however without giving some reason for that belief, cf. *supra*, pp. 28-29.

The second does not concern us directly. A good account of nineteenth-century opinion in this matter is given by Menzio, *op. cit.*

We are here concerned with the third problem, which involves that of the date of the *Vita Nuova*, that is, the apparent conflict between the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio* in their accounts of Dante's relation to the Donna Gentile. The discussion of this matter in the nineteenth century, by pioneers of Dante criticism, is constantly referred to in the contributions of their more modern followers, so that it is unnecessary to give bibliographical references to it here. See, however, the good summary and criticism of Fornaciari, 129-85.

As to the twentieth-century discussion, there are a number of valuable contributions, deserving careful attention, the conclusions of which are nevertheless invalidated because they do not admit the date indicated astronomically in *Conv.* II, II, 1, i.e., August, 1293. The most important of these are as follows: Pascoli 2, 124-26; 131-32; 199-200. Chistoni, 215-20 (reviewed by Barbi in *BSDIt.* X, 313-23, and Busetto in *RBLIt.* XII, 124-28). Zappia, 29-40 and 62-74 (reviewed Barbi in *BSDIt.* XII, 204-23, and Vossler in *LBIGRPh.* XXVII, 60-64). Corbellini, *op. cit.* (but I have not seen his *Quistioni ciniane e la V.N. di D. Estr. d. Bullet. Stor. Pistoiese* VI, fasc. 1-2). Picciola in *Lect. Dant. Op. Min.*, 115-17. Santi, Vol. II, 59-78, and in *GD.*, XXII (1914) 117-29 and 173-81. Fletcher 1, 41-51. Ciafardini, 41 and 48-51. De Labusquette, 685-93. Federn, tr. 153-54. Santangelo, 122-26.

Of the scholars who do not reject the date August 1293, I will mention first those who hold that the Donna Gentile is an allegorical figure even in the *Vita Nuova*.

The explanation of Scrocca, (59-70), which has the merit of treating the experience related in *Conv.* II, II and II, XII (XIII) as later in time than that narrated in the *Vita Nuova*, is open to two objections: First, the study of Philosophy is said to have been rejected in the *Vita Nuova* as irrational, merely because it was a rival to Dante's love for Beatrice. Second, Scrocca says that already at the end of the *Vita Nuova*, Philosophy has become the "ancella" of the Revelation, a situation which is preserved in the *Convivio*. But Philosophy is certainly not the "ancella" of Beatrice in *Conv.* II, xv(xvi), 6. See the review of Barbi in *BSDIt.* IX, 30-33. Lora (113-55) also considers the experience related in the *Convivio* as other and later than that described in the *Vita Nuova*, but he does not face the difficulties of the apparent conflict between the two accounts, and is content with saying: "I capi-

toli 35-38 della *Vita Nuova* preannunziano, in una forma fuggitiva e per accenni, l'opera del *Convivio*..." (p. 126). Cf. the reviews in *RCLII*. XXVI, 107-09, and *GSLII*. LXXII, 310-11.

The thesis of Beck, explained first in 1906 (Beck, 432-49, now in *JDD* IX-1925) and much more completely in 1926 (*ZRPh*. XLV, 28-52), is that *Conv.* II and III are only a commentary on the episode in the *Vita Nuova*, a commentary written in retrospect and illustrating respectively: *Conv.* II, the aberration of intellectual pride during which Dante for "alquanti die" substituted Science for Faith; and *Conv.* III, the poet's devotion to Philosophy now recognised by him as being of the same nature as Faith and the hand-maiden of the latter. In the *Vita Nuova* Dante does not repent of his love for Philosophy, but only of a misconception of Philosophy as Human Science, and of preferring the latter to Faith represented by Beatrice. This preference, and not the love for the Donna Gentile, is the "avversario de la ragione." Beck quotes with approval the doctrine of Earle that the *Vita Nuova* is "an allegorical story of the conflict of Faith and Science."

The most general objection to this carefully elaborated theory is that it makes of the *Vita Nuova* no youthful work, but a work written with the same maturity of thought and the same fund of information as the *Convivio*, and indeed the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia*, both of which latter works are quoted to elucidate the "libello". A more particular objection is that, while it is true that in *Conv.* III, vii, 15 and 17, and in III, viii, 20, it is said of the lady — not of Philosophy — that she was "ordinata ne la mente di Dio in testimonio de la fede," and that she is "aiutatrice de la fede nostra," Philosophy is nowhere in *Conv.* III represented as subordinate to faith. On the contrary she is "nobilissima di tutte assolutamente" (*Conv.* III xii, 12); she is essentially divine, and only human in the sense that human beings are able to participate in her (*Conv.* III, xiii, 8); she "aids our faith" in the sense that she supplies reasons for believing, "Onde la nostra buona fede ha sua origine" (*Conv.* III, xiv, 14). "...filosofia è uno amoroso uso di sapienza, lo quale massimamente è in Dio... Ne l'altre intelligenze è per modo minore... Per che dire si può che Dio non vede, cioè non intende, cosa alcuna tanto gentile quanto questa... Oh nobilissimo ed eccellentissimo cuore, che ne la sposa de lo Imperadore del cielo s'intende, e non solamente sposa, ma suora e figlia diletteissima" (*Conv.* III, xii, 12-14).

The explanation that, in the *Vita Nuova*, the "avversario de la ragione" is not the love for the Donna Gentile is particularly unconvincing. As for the purely allegorical character attributed to the lady in the *Vita Nuova*, and in *Voi che intendendo*, Beck makes of that a matter of confidence in Dante's word, but Dante nowhere says "dass unter der d. gent. der V.N. nur die Philosophie zu verstehen sei" (*ZRPh*. XLV, 33). On the contrary it is just as clear in *Conv.* II, ii that the lady was a real woman as it is in *Conv.* II, xii (xiii) that she was Philosophy. By all means let us believe Dante, but let us accept all that he says and not only half.

Similar to the theory of Beck, although not identical with it, is that of Grasso (139-68). The latter is willing to consider the account

in the *Convivio* either as a part of the same account as that in the *Vita Nuova*, or as a continuation of it. His explanation of the rejection of the Donna Gentile is less subtle than that of Beck, for he admits that it is the love for her that is called "avversario de la ragione," etc. Cf. the review by Renier in *GSLIt.* XLIII, 401-04.

Here too should be mentioned the explanation of Fletcher in *ModPhil.* XIII, 129-42, which has much in common with those of Beck and Grasso. They require us to ignore the following facts: 1) In the *Vita Nuova* the final judgement of the author is wholly against his affection for the Donna Gentile, without any reservation. 2) In the *Convivio*, the judgement of the author is wholly in favour of his love for the Donna Gentile, and he rejoices that it has supplanted the former love for Beatrice. 3) There is no indication in the *Convivio* that Beatrice is intended to be a symbol of any kind, but there are clear indications to the contrary.

I know the contribution of Grazzani, *Spiegazione dell'allegoria della V.N.* Città di Castello, Lapi, 1905, only through the reviews in *GSLIt.* XLVIII, 234-36, and *BSDIt.* XII, 245-46. Federzoni (1, 63-64, n. 1, and 373-74), according to whom the Donna Gentile is, in the *Vita Nuova*, both a real woman and a symbol of pagan and rationalistic philosophy, does not discuss the conflict between the two accounts directly; nor do Cochin (tr. pp. XLVIII-LIII), for whom she is a symbol of "la vie extérieure," or Borchardt (42-45 and 48-49), for whom she is a composite symbol representing several women whom Dante courted after the death of Beatrice. Borchardt dismisses the *Convivio* as "eine Rüstkammer des neoguel-fischen Obskurantismus" (p. 57). Cf. Bassermann's notice of this well-informed and suggestive but too ingenious book, in *DVL.* II, 862-63. Piccoli (ed. pp. XI-XIV and 35-36) also disregards the conflict.

That the two accounts should not agree is not astonishing to Cesareo (ed., pp. XXVI-XXIX and XXXVI-XXXVIII) since for him the *Vita Nuova* itself is full of similar and amusing inconsistencies. His well-known view is that the Donna Gentile, in the *Vita Nuova*, is neither a real woman nor a symbol of any definite kind, but an invention of the poet for the sake of providing a motive for the rescue of himself by the dead Beatrice. Cf. the review of Parodi in *BSDIt.* XXI, 10-25.

Let us mention next those scholars who believe that, in the *Vita Nuova*, the Donna Gentile is a real woman. The majority of these believe also that in the *Convivio* Dante is attempting to disguise her as a symbol of Philosophy, and they conclude that the two accounts are irreconcilable.

In *BSDIt.* X, 322, Barbi holds that, where Dante says (*Conv.* I, ii, 16) "la quale infamia si cessa, per lo presente di me parlare, interamente, lo quale mostra che non passione ma virtù sia stata la movente cagione," the poet means by "lo presente di me parlare" the explanation of the allegory, but Dante is speaking of the whole commentary, as is evident from the next sentence: "Intendo anche mostrare la vera sentenza... nascosa sotto figura d'allegoria..." This passage should be compared with *Conv.* III, i, 11 and 12: "Dico che pensai che da molti, di retro da me, forse sarei stato

ripreso di levezza d'animo, udendo me essere dal primo amore mutato; per che, a torre via questa riprensione, nullo migliore argomento era che dire quale era quella donna che m'avea mutato, ecc.," where, contrary to the hasty opinion of some, there is no reference to the allegory, for the context shows that the poet is merely giving his motives for writing the second canzone. He concludes, a sentence later, saying: "Impresi dunque a lodare questa donna...; e cominciai a dire: *Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona*." Barbi also assumes that, by declaring that the "vera sentenza" is concealed in the allegory, Dante is implying that the literal meaning is false. See Barbi again in *BSDIt.* XI, 10-12, and especially in *StD.* I, 32-36, where (36) he argues that in the *Vita Nuova* Dante is already convinced that the Donna Gentile is "accompagnata d'Amore." But the whole episode, in the prose commentary, represents the poet as debating whether she is so or not, and the conclusion is in the negative. Even the verses in this episode do not positively declare and do not quite take for granted that the lady is "accompagnata d'amore." The sonnet *Parole mie che per lo mondo siete*, which repudiates the Donna Gentile, declaring that she is not "accompagnata d'Amore" ("Con lei non state, chè non v'è Amore"), is a retraction not of the sonnets in the *Vita Nuova*, but only of *Voi che intendendo* and the other poems written afterward in honour of the Donna Gentile. And the reason why these latter poems are retracted is that they — and *Voi che intendendo* is mentioned as the first of them — are those in which it is admitted that the lady is "accompagnata d'Amore." Note incidentally, too, that the verse "Quando trovate donna di valore" is proof that the lady of *Voi che intendendo* is being treated as a real woman, for the implication that Philosophy is not a "donna di valore" would be impossible. This last point is mentioned by Santi in *GD.* XXII, 119.

To this group belong: Zingarelli, 130-33, and 713, n. 131, Azzolina, 186-94; Melodia, ed. 236-37, n. 4; Zuccante, 231-47, who, however, does not discuss the conflict directly; Sauter, tr. 36, 95, and 146-47, n. 2; Wicksteed, tr. 428-35; Grandgent 2, 174-75; Scarano, 102-07, who attempts a partial reconciliation by supposing that, in the *Convivio*, Dante is implying that he rejected Philosophy because, at the time, he failed to appreciate her grandeur; cf. the review of Marigo in *BSDIt.* XXVI, 79-85.

Parodi, who also belongs to this group, and who considers the chief part of the conflict to be insoluble, nevertheless contrives a clever reconciliation of the two accounts (in *BSDIt.* XXI, 10-25) as far as the chronology is concerned. This reconciliation is based on two postulates: — First, the "tempo alcuno" of *Conv.* II, 11, 3, is a space of time elapsed between August 1293 and the writing of *Voi che intendendo*. This space is reckoned to be about four or six months, so that the canzone would be written at the beginning of 1294. Secondly, the appearance of Philosophy in August 1293, mentioned in *Conv.* II, 11, 1, corresponds not to the first acquaintance with Philosophy, mentioned in *Conv.* II, xii (xiii), 1-6, when Dante imagined her as a "donna gentile," but to the time, mentioned in *Conv.* II, xii (xiii), 7, when he began to

go "là dov'ella si dimostrava veracemente." The second of these suppositions would seem legitimate to me but for the belief I hold that in *Conv.* II, II, 1, Dante is speaking not of Philosophy but of a lady of flesh and blood. The first seems highly improbable, because the "tempo alcuno" of *Conv.* II, II, 3, is time elapsed "prima che questo amore fosse perfetto," that is before the time when "lo mio beneplacito fu contento a disposarsi a quell'immagine," an event which, as the contents of the canzone and the commentary show, had not yet occurred when *Voi che intendendo* was written.

McKenzie, ed. 125-28, and Zonta, 112-28, dissent from the majority in that they believe that, in the *Convivio*, the Donna Gentile is both a real woman and a symbol of Philosophy. McKenzie considers the date August 1293 doubtful, and the conflict between the two accounts unimportant. Cf. the review in *MLN.* XXXVIII, 432-40. Zonta considers the conflict insoluble.

Pietrobono, 101-49, and Ortiz, 17-42, explain the apparent conflict by supposing that the *Convivio* was composed before V.N. xxxix (xl) and the following chapters, which were added later in order to make the *Vita Nuova* a suitable introduction to the *Commedia*. Ortiz seems to hold that the whole of the episode of the Donna Gentile in the *Vita Nuova* is later than the *Convivio*. Pietrobono holds that the whole of the *Vita Nuova* was revised later. See the objections of Beck in *ZRPh.* XLV, 30-32.

Lastly there are those who believe that in *Conv.* II, II, which gives the date August 1293, Dante is representing the Donna Gentile to us as the same real woman that she was in the *Vita Nuova*, and is telling us of a renewal of his devotion to her, a renewal which occurred some two years after the episode in the *Vita Nuova*, and that he is explaining the rejection of the Donna Gentile as an incident in a period of hesitation between 1291 and 1293. Understood in this way, the apparent conflict between the two accounts — as regards both the different attitude of the poet to the lady, and the chronological discrepancy — becomes explicable. Shaw in *MLR.* X (1915), 129-49 and 320-37. Guerri, ed. 2, 175-76, n. 2. Cf. however Guerri ed. 96-97, n. 1, where it is suggested that the date August 1293 may not "correspond to the truth."

The following table illustrates the chronology according to my own view:

"Alquanto tempo." <i>Conv.</i> II, XII (XIII), 2.	1290 June	Death of Beatrice. V. N. xxviii (xxix), 1. <i>Conv.</i> II, II, 1; II, XII (XIII), 1.
	1291 February	Dante begins to read Boethius. <i>Conv.</i> II, XII (XIII), 2-3.
	1291 June	Anniversary of the death of Beatrice. V. N. xxxiv (xxxv), 1. "alquanto tempo." V. N. xxxv (xxxvi), 1.

"Trenta mesi."
Conv. II, xii
(xiii), 7
Feb. 1291 - Aug. 1293

First appearance of the Donna Gentile. V. N.,
ibid.

First affection for the Donna Gentile: "alquanti
die." V.N. xxxix (xl), 2.

Repentance of Dante: the "forte imaginazione."
V.N. xxxix (xl), 1.

Dante begins the Vita Nuova: "a l'entrata de la
mia gioventute." Conv. I, i, 17.

1292 May End of Dante's 27th year.

Dante finishes the Vita Nuova.

Dante begins to frequent the "scuole de li reli-
giosi, ecc." Conv. II, xii (xiii), 7.

1293 August The Donna Gentile appears "accompagnata d'A-
more." Dante begins to surrender and writes
Voi che intendendo. Conv. II, ii, 5, and II, xii
(xiii), 9.

"Tempo alcuno e nutrimento di pensieri." Conv.
II, ii, 3.

Dante surrenders completely: "Lo mio benepla-
cito fu contento, ecc." Conv. II, ii, 2.

85, p. 31. — Rajna, "Per la data della Vita Nuova," etc., in
GSLII. VI (1885), 113-56.

86, p. 31. — V.N. xl (xli), 1.

87, p. 32. — Cf. *supra*, pp. 3-5.

88, p. 32. — Conv. I, i, 17.

89, p. 32. — Conv. I, i, 16.

90, p. 33. — V.N. II (i).

91, p. 33. — V.N. xi.

92, p. 33. — V.N. xiii, xiv, xv, and xvi.

93, p. 33. — Conv. IV, xxiv, 7.

94, p. 34. — Boccaccio I Vol. I, 48.

95, p. 34. — *Ibid.*, 13.

96, p. 35. — *Ibid.*, 17.

97, p. 35. — Barbi in *StD*. I (1920), 148-55.

98, p. 35. — Easter Sunday in 1292 was April 7 according to
the Gauss formula given by Angelitti, 4-5.

II

INCIPIT VITA NOVA

The rubric in the imaginary "book of my memory," beneath which Dante pretends to find the words he means to copy into "this little book," is in Latin, but the name of the little book itself is Italian — "Vita Nuova," as the author tells us in that passage of the *Convivio* where he also declares the name of the latter work.¹ In discussing the meaning of the name of the book, therefore, we need not entertain any suspicion of a peculiarly Latin significance.²

The meanings of the adjective *nuova* which we are called upon to consider in interpreting the expression *Vita Nuova* can be properly summarised in the following three groups:

1. *Vita Nuova* means New Life in the sense that this life is different from what it was formerly.
2. It means New Life in the sense that this life is different from what it becomes later.
3. It means Unusual, Marvellous Life.

The first two are general interpretations, which combine others that differ specifically from each other, but the third is a particular one. It is the one adopted by Federzoni and Davidson: "una vita singolare, confortata da specialissima grazia divina," says the former; "strange" or "mystic," says the latter.³

The adjective *nuovo* frequently has the meaning 'strange', and Dante uses it in this sense seven times in the *Vita*

Nuova.⁴ The interpretation is appropriate too to the spirit in which Dante composed the book, believing as he did that he had been miraculously guided by his love for Beatrice. Nothing more, I think, can be said in favour of this solution of our problem, for the arguments of Federzoni, which are largely based on his belief that the *Vita Nuova* was composed about 1300, and was intended to be an introduction to the *Commedia*, do not commend it to me.⁵ The suggestions of Davidson that *novo* in the expression *dolce stil novo* (*Purg.* xxiv, 57) may mean 'strange', and that the number *nove* may have something to do with *Vita Nova*, are merely suggestions. As to the latter nothing definite can be affirmed, but as to the former it may be said that Buonaggiunta, in the passage referred to, cites the canzone *Donne che avete* as the typical poem of the "dolce stil novo," and in the *Vita Nuova* Dante, explaining how he came to write the canzone, says: "a me convenne ripigliare matera *nuova e più nobile* che la passata."⁶

The interpretation Unusual, Marvellous Life seems, therefore, to be one that might well be accepted if there were no convincing reasons for adopting another, but not otherwise.

The upholders of the first generic interpretation — *Vita Nuova* means New Life in the sense that this life is different from what it was formerly — are almost unanimous in supposing that the alteration intended is that which was brought about by the advent of Dante's love for Beatrice.⁷ They differ as to the quality of that alteration. Their chief argument is that the subject of the *Vita Nuova* is Dante's experience with love.

The supporters of the second general interpretation — *Vita Nuova* means New Life in the sense that this life is different from what it becomes later — all believe that the 'newness' of the life consists in its youth. They differ only as to what is meant by youth, and as to whether it means any definite period or not. Their chief argument is

that in *Purgatorio* xxx the words *vita nova* are used by Beatrice as a chronological indication.

There are also those who have attempted to reconcile the two general interpretations, with what results we shall see.⁸

The passage of *Purgatorio* xxx upon which the second interpretation is founded is as follows:

Non pur per ovra de le rote magne,
 che drizzan ciascun seme ad alcun fine
 secondo che le stelle son compagne,
 ma per larghezza di grazie divine,
 che sì alti vapori hanno a lor piova,
 che nostre viste là non van vicine,
 questi fu tal ne la sua *vita nova*,
 virtualmente, ch'ogni abito destro
 fatto averebbe in lui mirabil prova.
 Ma tanto più maligno e più silvestro
 si fa 'l terren col mal seme e non colto,
 quant' elli ha più di buon vigor terrestre.
 Alcun tempo il sostenni col mio volto:
 mostrando li occhi giovanetti a lui,
 meco il menava in dritta parte volto.
 Sì tosto come in su la soglia fui
 di mia seconda etade e mutai vita,
 questi si tolse a me, e diessi altrui.⁹

Beatrice, royally calm and angry, stands high upon the symbolic chariot, a veiled, inexorable judge. She shows no pity for Dante's dismay at the loss of Virgil, a loss that leaves him defenceless, convicted in the presence of the revealed truth.

Guardaci ben! Ben son, ben son Beatrice.

Shame overwhelms him and bows his head, but when he perceives the sympathy of the pitying angels he breaks down and sobs. She is not touched. She turns to the angels and completes his humiliation with the tale they know as well as she and Dante, the story of how the rosiest promises of his early youth were broken when her guiding presence was removed.

She is contrasting the life which he was living while he followed the light of her young eyes with that which he lived when she had shed her fleshly garment. "*La Vita Nuova* di cui qui si parla è propriamente la vita giovanile, spontanea, virginale per così dire, determinata anzitutto

... per ovra delle ruote magne,
che drizzan ciascun seme ad alcun fine.

In essa Dante fu 'virtualmente' tale

... ch'ogni abito destro
fatto averebbe in lui mirabil prova.

Che se questa età ne ha un'altra di fronte, è ciò che tien dietro, non già ciò che precede, che ad essa si contrappone e che la fa chiamar *nuova*:

Ma tanto più maligno e più silvestro
si fa'l terren col mal seme e non colto,
quant' elli ha più di buon vigor terrestre."¹⁰

The meaning of *vita nova* in *Incipit vita nova*, continues Rajna, is unquestionably the same as that of the same words in this passage of the *Purgatorio*: the context of the latter leaves that matter in no doubt; no one has ever doubted it. So our *Vita Nuova* means Youthful Life.¹¹

It cannot evidently mean Youth in the sense defined by Dante in the *Convivio*,¹² where the twenty years between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five are allotted to "gioventute". According to Rajna the period meant is one without any precise chronological limits; it is a time preceded by childish unconsciousness, and followed by mature reflexion, as is indicated by the previous words about the book of memory.

Flamini believed that the period intended corresponds exactly to that which is called "adolescenzia" in the *Convivio*. He points out that the death of Beatrice occurred when Dante was twenty-five years old, and it was then, according to her own words, that he began to wander from the right path, and in the *Convivio* adolescence is

defined as the first part of human life, which ends about the twenty-fifth year.¹³

As far as the passage of *Purgatorio* xxx is concerned there is much to support Flamini's opinion, for it is not unreasonable to suppose that when Dante was writing the *Purgatorio* his views on the ages of man were still those he had expressed in the *Convivio*.

Si tosto come in su la soglia fui
di mia seconda etade e mutai vita,

says Beatrice. She had died in her own twenty-fifth year, as well as in that of Dante. Her "second age" would correspond to the second part of human life defined in the *Convivio* as beginning with the twenty-sixth year. The expression "upon the threshold of my second age" cannot but remind us of the words of the *Convivio*: "questa prima etade (i.e., adolescence) è porta e via per la quale s'entra ne la nostra buona vita,"¹⁴ and "ne la porta de la gioventute."¹⁵ The description of adolescence in *Convivio* IV, xxiv, xxv, is a description of a period of promise that awaits its fulfilment in the next period, that of youth, and so it may well be that Beatrice, in emphasizing the difference between Dante's "vita nova" and his subsequent life, is comparing his "adolescenzia" with his "gioventute", or at least with the first part of the latter.

But is it certain that the name Dante gave to his first book has the same meaning as *vita nova* in *Purg.* xxx, which was written so many years later? If that name means 'adolescence' as defined in the *Convivio*, it is not exactly appropriate, since the story of the *Vita Nuova* goes beyond Dante's twenty-fifth year.¹⁶ And even if it means "youthful life" in general and nothing more, it is singularly inadequate as a title for the book.

It is inadequate because a book bearing the name "youthful life" or "adolescence" would naturally be expected to afford some account of the chief events of that period. The

reader would have a right to expect some mention of the place of birth of the hero, of his family and his friends; of his material fortunes, his various occupations, his studies and pastimes; some mention of the growth of his ideas on more than one subject. All such expectations would be disappointed by this book; it contains nothing of the kind. From the beginning there is an evident intention to avoid all material details. The name of the author, who is the hero, is not given, nor are any names of places or real names of persons, except in one of the sonnets. It is obvious that the author intends the reader to be concerned only with the internal life of the hero: whenever external matters are mentioned it is done in the vaguest way possible. And even so, no adequate account of the thoughts and feelings of the author is to be found, but only a very full account of his thoughts and feelings on one subject: that subject is love.

It is this consideration — that the *Vita Nuova* is all about Dante's love and about nothing else — that, as has been said, is the broad foundation for the first interpretation, according to which the New Life is a life made new by the renovating power of love. It is this consideration, no doubt, that caused some who preferred the second interpretation to attempt to reconcile it with the first, for, convinced though they were that *vita nova* in *Purgatorio* xxx means *youthful life*, and that the name of the book must have the same meaning, they felt obliged to introduce into the name of the book some indication of its subject.

The conciliation of the two interpretations does not, at first sight, seem difficult, for even granting that Beatrice in the terrestrial Paradise is using *vita nova* as a chronological indication, it is undeniable that the "youthful life" to which she is referring is a life in which Dante was guided by love for her, as he was not later. But to say that one interpretation suggests or implies another is not to identify the two or to make them equally important.

Wulff's translation of the *Vita Nuova* into Swedish gives the title of the book as "I Livets Vår," 'In the Springtime of Life'. The translator explains: "The title seems to indicate at the same time both 'the days of youth' and the 'new life' which, with the love for Beatrice, had sprung up in the soul of the boy."¹⁷ Rajna, in reviewing the book, objects to the double meaning thus attributed to the title, and points out that the title "In the Springtime of Life" does not itself imply any renewal of life, with the advent of love. He approves of Wulff's periphrasis because, although its meaning is the same as 'youthful life', it conveys an added poetical colour which is attractive to the reader and in harmony with the contents of the book, but he is inflexible in refusing to admit that *Vita Nuova* can mean both 'youthful life' and 'life renewed by love'. "... qui, dove si tratta di un titolo, è a mio vedere un far torto a Dante il ritenere ch'egli volesse di proposito essere ambiguo. Ammetterei una pluralità di sensi sovrapposti omologamente uno all'altro, quale ci è data dal linguaggio allegorico nelle varie sue forme; ma non so ammettere due significazioni simultanee che reciprocamente si fanno contrasto e si escludono."

Nevertheless Kraus in his *Dante*¹⁸ translates the name as *Liebesfrühlung*, which, unlike Wulff's *I livets Vår*, really does attempt to combine the two meanings, and it was perhaps Rajna's approval of Wulff's title that caused Cian to incline to approve that of Kraus, for he evidently believes that he is not in disagreement with Rajna when he says: "... l'uso più frequente di *novo* e *novello* in Dante (basti l'età *novella* dell'Inf., xxxiii, 6) e nella tradizione poetica nostra, ... m'ha sempre indotto a preferire la spiegazione *età giovanile*, la quale non esclude, si badi, anzi include necessariamente il concetto di amorosa, come a dire dunque: giovinezza d'amore. E così ci avviciniamo all'interpretazione, forse un po' troppo libera, ma comprensiva, e, diciamo pure, suggestiva, proposta dal Kr."¹⁹ He cites

the name used by Giovanni Villani in his chronicle, "Vita Nova d'Amore," and understands it to mean "vita giovanile e amorosa."

It is doubtful whether Cian really thought that the two most common interpretations can be made one, but it ought at least to be clear that expressions such as "Springtime of Life" and "Springtime of Love" are only unsuccessful attempts at such a reconciliation. They both interpret *Vita Nuova* as meaning the time when Dante's love was young: they add the quality of amorousness to the 'youthfulness' of interpretation number two, without damaging it, but they have nothing of the essential part of interpretation number one, that is, the difference between this life and Dante's previous life. A life that is new (i.e., youthful) and amorous besides, is not the same thing as a life that is new (i.e., different) for the reason that it is amorous.

That the addition to youth of the qualification 'amorous' does not reconcile the second interpretation with the first is clearly recognised by Scherillo where he says: "E il libello intitolò *Vita Nuova*. 'Nuova' non perchè contrapposta a un'altra 'vita', più antica e scevra d'amore o consacrata a un amore meno beatificante, bensì perchè giovanile ed amorosa insieme (cf. Rajna nel *Bull.* V, 103ss; e Barbi VIII, 245). La *Vita Nuova* è come a dire la nuova stagione della vita, la primavera della vita, 'l'età novella' (cf. *Inf.* xxxiii, 88 [and other passages])." Adolescence, he says, is "accrescimento di vita," and in it "l'anima nostra intende al crescere e allo abbellire del corpo, onde molti e grandi trasmutazioni sono nella persona (*Conv.* IV, xxiv, 1-2)." The book is a book of adolescence "non a cominciare dall'infanzia più o meno inconsapevole, bensì da quel tempo di cui cominciò ad aver chiaro il ricordo."²⁰ He thus takes a firm stand in favour of the interpretation 'youthful life', and in favour of Flamini's special view, 'adolescence,' so that it is aston-

ishing to find him at the same time saying: "Just as in the spring everything is renewed, so in the 'seconda adolescenza' from nine to twenty-five years, Love springs in the noble heart," and (with reference to the frequent use by the Provençal poets, of the adjective *nou*, especially Raimbaut d'Aurenga's 'Ab nou cor et ab nou talen') : "l'Amore schiudeva una vita nuova, una poesia nuova, un mondo nuovo." There seems to be an inevitable contradiction in a position of this kind.

The peace-makers whom I have mentioned were apparently influenced in their conciliatory efforts by two motives: first, they were persuaded that *vita nova* in *Purgatorio* xxx means 'youthful life,' and secondly, they felt that Youthful Life was an inadequate name for the book, unless it conveyed the idea of love, but the only way by which the two meanings can be reconciled in the title is by considering that the title is ambiguous.

And why not? Is not the word 'new' an ambiguous word in all languages? It is impossible to think of anything as 'new' without thinking of the two facts: first, that it is not as it was; second, that it will not always be as it is. 'New Year's Day' is the first day of a year that was not on the last day of December, and it is the first day of a year that will be old by next December. When we speak of a "new moon" it is doubtful whether we are thinking of a moon that was not visible before, or whether we are thinking of a moon at the beginning of its monthly growth. It would not be astonishing to hear anyone say: "I am going to turn over a brand-new leaf," thus showing that he has in mind at the same time both kinds of newness.²¹

Dante was an extraordinarily fine "word-monger": to him the understanding of words was the same as abstract knowledge. In describing his introduction to the study of philosophy he says: "Io, che cercava di consolarme, trovai non solamente a le mie lagrime rimedio, ma vocabuli d'autori e di scienze e di libri."²² He discovered "vocabuli," a

quaint expression which shows how important words were to him. As to the word 'new', the following sentence shows how well he understood its possible ambiguity: "E però vuole essere manifesta la ragione, che de le nuove cose lo fine non è certo; acciò che la esperienza non è mai avuta onde le cose usate e servate sono e nel processo e nel fine commisurate,"²³ for here "le nuove cose" are compared with the past and the future, and the adjective certainly has both meanings.

So when Rajna said that the two meanings are in conflict and exclude each other, he did not mean that the word *nuova* cannot at the same time express both, but that the two concepts — which are always distinguishable — are incompatible in the name of a book, if that name is to have a clear significance. In other words he cannot believe that Dante would choose an ambiguous title for his book, even though in that same work he uses the word "salute" in a material and in a symbolical sense at the same time.

We cannot exclude the possibility that Dante may have chosen the name *Vita Nuova* because it was capable of conveying more than one meaning, and if we open the doors of our mind to that possibility, then all the plausible meanings that Dante may have thought of become possible. They become possible but not all of them probable. It will be admitted that a double meaning is more likely than a triple meaning; and if, of two interpretations that may be considered in combination, one should prove to be altogether suitable as a name for this book — judged by the ascertainable views of the author himself — and the other not so suitable, then we ought to conclude that the former interpretation was at least preponderant in his mind, even if not to the exclusion of the latter.

I think it can be shown that New Life in the sense of 'life renewed by love' — the most usual form of interpre-

tation number one — is the first and the only important meaning of *Vita Nuova* as the name of the book. The expression in *Purgatorio* xxx is no clearer and no more simple — in fact, as we shall see, it is more complex — than the name of the book, and, considering how much later the *Purgatorio* was written than the *Vita Nuova*, it seems to me that it is more reasonable to try to determine the meaning of the title first, and then to see what bearing that meaning has on the passage in the *Purgatorio*, than to attempt to force upon the former an unsuitable meaning derived from the latter.

That 'youthful life' is unsuitable because inadequate as a title for the *Vita Nuova*, is plain enough,²⁴ and, granting that it is the correct meaning of Beatrice's "vita nova," we should not be surprised that the name does not fit the book. Beatrice is comparing Dante's "vita nova" with a subsequent period of unfaithfulness evidently much longer and much more significant than the short time of yielding to the temptation of the *donna gentile* which is described in the *Vita Nuova*. When Dante composed the latter work he had no suspicion that he would again be faithless to Beatrice and the ideal she represented: he was writing under the influence of adoring love that glowed with warmth. He was not reflecting upon his young days, as an old or middle aged man does, with mixed feelings.

{ He was writing the story of his love for Beatrice and of what it meant to him. He had no clear recollection of a period previous to his first acquaintance with her, but he remembered well the tremendous experience of their first meeting: and so he writes down that with that experience his new life began. The description of that experience follows the words "incipit vita nova" immediately, and the word "incipit" itself — which, as has been said, is not the titular inscription of a book but a rubric in a book — indicates the beginning of a new chapter, while the experience itself is so revolutionary as to draw an indelible

line separating it from the indistinct part that precedes it.

That the advent of love is the beginning of a revolution that reforms the whole life of the lover, is a commonplace of human experience, testified to by all the sincere confessions in erotic literature. In Dante's mind it took the peculiar form suggested by Guinizelli: it was the awakening into actuality of potential love lying dormant in every noble heart. Carducci, following Salvini and others, called it "regeneration", meaning a new birth in a moral and religious sense. He recalled appropriately that Beatrice was "distruggitrice di tutti li vizi e regina delle virtudi" (*V. N.* x, 2) and that for her Dante "uscì ... de la volgare schiera" (*Inf.* II, 105).²⁵ It has been objected that at the age of nine Dante was an innocent child in no need of regeneration, but it might be replied that regeneration is needed even where there is no guilt. In the *Convivio* Dante distinguishes between "vizii innati" and "vizii consuetudinarii" and says that the love of his lady is capable of destroying even the innate vices.²⁶ We do not need, however, to have recourse to the learning of the *Convivio* or to the attributes of the lady Philosophy, for it is sufficiently evident that the love for Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova* has a moral and religious character even in the beginning of the prose commentary. Marigo suggests that the solemn words of the "spirito de la vita," "Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi," are a reminiscence of *Isaiah* XL, 10, "Ecce Dominus Deus in fortitudine veniet"; and those of "lo spirito animale," "Apparuit iam beatitudo vestra," a reminiscence of *Galatians*, iv, 15, "ubi est ergo beatitudo vestra"; and he is inclined to think that the name *Vita Nuova* itself was suggested to the author by St. Paul's words in *Romans* vi, 4, "in novitate vitae ambulare."²⁷

Guinizelli's theory of love, rudimentary as it is, compared with the development of it which is expounded by

Dante in all his works, considers love as a wholly good influence comparable to the love for God. It remained for Dante to identify fine sexual love with love for the highest good, that is, God. In the *Vita Nuova* Beatrice comes to be regarded so clearly as a miraculous representative of God on earth that she is compared to Christ, following Giovanna Primavera as the Messiah followed John the Baptist; she is thought of as being carried up into heaven like the Virgin Mary, and the angels announce her arrival with the words that welcomed Christ into Jerusalem; the news of her death is broken to us with the words of Jeremiah, "Quomodo sedet sola civitas, etc.," and all this without a thought of sacrilege, without any of Guinizelli's scruples.

It is not unreasonable, then, to speak of regeneration in a religious sense, but, just as D'Ancona did not insist on this particular sense,²⁸ so those who hold that *Vita Nuova* means *Life Renewed by Love* may well leave to the book itself the explanation of how the renovation occurs, for the manner of it is not explicit in the title.

Dante's theory of love recognizes that all love is for the good, and that it is the object of love that determines how the emotion is to be classified, whether it is good or bad, high or low. The theory is far more elaborate in the *Convivio* than in the *Vita Nuova*, and in the *Commedia* than in the *Convivio*. In the *Vita Nuova* Dante is concerned only with sexual love; in the *Convivio* chiefly with the love of knowledge; in the *Commedia* with every possible kind, and with love as it is in its essence — with all the manifold manifestations of the love of man for God, called forth by the love of God for man.

Now I hold that it would be illusory to explain an obscure passage of the *Vita Nuova* by means of an isolated passage in one of the later works, which might represent a later and quite different mental attitude of the author or might be concerned with a somewhat different subject;

but when one finds running throughout the works of Dante — not excluding the *Monarchia* — a theory of love that is consistent, and only more fully developed in the later works than in his earliest, one has a right to suppose that the more elementary exposition of that theory is essentially similar to the more complex.

The nature of love was the subject over which Dante pondered most. In his early youth it was the most fashionable subject of conversation and correspondence among the educated, the chief subject of debate among the diletanti of lyric poetry; in his mature years it was the subject upon which reason and revelation had most to say: it is the subject of the last words of the *Commedia* and the first of the *Vita Nuova*.

An important part of the theory of love was the doctrine of its awakening to actuality (when the suitable object presents itself) after lying dormant in the noble heart "tal volta poca e tal lunga stagione." But the exclusiveness of the circle of the naturally noble-hearted is somewhat modified already in the *Vita Nuova* by the statement that one of the beloved objects — Beatrice — is able to ennoble even the base-hearted, and so make the latter capable of love.²⁹ And that exclusiveness is still further modified in the *Convivio* where it is acknowledged that even those in whose souls the seed of nobility has never fallen may graft its product upon the root of instinct, and with careful cultivation produce the fruit of virtue.³⁰ Lastly in the *Commedia* the doctrine of the noble heart becomes indistinguishable from the doctrine of predestination, and since no individual is exempt from responsibility the importance of a small exclusive circle has almost vanished.

Thus may a single feature of Dante's marvellous theory of love grow and alter, but there is one characteristic of love — its essential feature — that never varies: the actualization of love is always conceived as the renewal of life.

The revolutionary character of the awakening of love in

Vita Nuova II (1) has already been mentioned. After describing the astounding effects within himself, Dante says: "D'allora innanzi dico che Amore signoreggiò la mia anima, la quale fu sì tosto a lui disponsata..." Of course there cannot be here any hint of a comparison with a later period which was to be different from this, when Love would no longer rule his soul; on the contrary the understood comparison is between the reign of love and the previous period when love was not known; the new life of love had now begun and was to continue. It continues throughout the book, which has no other subject than the growth of love in the heart and mind of the poet.³¹ The episodes in the story are the stages by which the author's understanding of love progresses. Love continues to renew the life over which he rules until the end of the book, where in the last sonnet the poet says:

Oltre la spera che più larga gira
passa 'l sospiro ch' esce del mio core:
intelligenza nova che l'Amore
piangendo mette in lui, pur su lo tira.

In the *Convivio*, the awakening of love is described as the sprouting of the first shoot from the seed of happiness sown in the soul of the well-disposed.³² This is the "appetito de l'animo" which grows "mettendo e diversificando per ciascuna potenza de l'anima, secondo la esigenza di quella. Germoglia dunque per la vegetativa, per la sensitiva e per la razionale; e disbrancasi per le vertuti di quelle tanto, dirizzando quelle tutte a le loro perfezioni e in quelle sostenendosi sempre, infino al punto che, con quella parte de la nostra anima che mai non muore, a l'altissimo e gloriosissimo seminadore al cielo ritorna."³³ The new metaphor of the growing plant has caused the awakening of love to be represented not as a sudden and revolutionary occurrence but as a gradual growth, which, however, extending itself through all the faculties of the soul, reforms the whole life. And where the love of knowledge,

which in the *Convivio* eclipses the love of woman, is represented again by a sexual metaphor, it is said that the beauty of the lady "ha podestade in rinnovare natura in coloro che la mirano..."³⁴

In the *Inferno* the sinners are punished according to the results in them of love of evil and of inferior good; in the *Paradiso* the saints enjoy the fruits of their perfection in love of different kinds, in lower and higher spheres, from the sexual lovers of Venus to the contemplative lovers of truth in Saturn, and they enjoy the bliss of the Empyrean according to their common love of the highest good. The second life of each soul is, like the first life, informed by the kind of love it cherishes.

In the *Purgatorio*, after Virgil, in the seventeenth canto, has been discussing the kinds of love which determine the arrangement of Hell and Purgatory, Dante, in the eighteenth, asks him the time-honoured question, the question which had been so often frivolously asked, and so often answered partially: what is love? And Virgil, in reply, undertakes to define love as it is in its essence, no matter what kind of love it be, no matter to what kind of object it be directed.

Vostra apprensiva da esser verace
tragge intenzione, e dentro a voi la spiega,
sì che l'animo ad essa volger face;
E se, rivolto, inver di lei si piega,
quel piegare è amor, quell'è natura
che per piacer di novo in voi si lega.³⁵

Love is the inclination of the mind toward the attractive image abstracted from some material object and displayed in the imagination and memory. Or, more briefly, it is nature renewing itself in man by means of pleasure. The definition is a double one, but the second part only sums up epigrammatically what has already been said by the first. The inclination spoken of is a bending of the mind, not of the senses; it includes the consent of the will. It is

what the mind takes pleasure in, what it devotes itself to, that makes the life of the man: that conscious devotion to any object renews the life, when it takes place.

This is Dante's way in the *Commedia* of describing the development of love out of potentiality into actuality; the immediately preceding lines are:

L'animo ch'è creato ad amar presto,
ad ogni cosa è mobile che piace,
tosto che dal piacere in atto è desto.

It is different from the way of the *Vita Nuova* and of the *Convivio* because the former work treats only of sexual love, and the latter of intellectual love. Here Dante has found a descriptive definition of human love of all kinds. Here we have his definition of the essence of human love: whenever a human being experiences love, his nature is renewed by pleasure and his subsequent life is a new life.³⁶ Different as this manner of describing the event is, it is similar to the others in that the event is represented as a renewal of life. That Dante found this to be the essential characteristic of all human love is to me the most convincing argument in favour of the belief that *Vita Nuova* means New Life in the sense of 'Life Renewed by Love', for it is the name of a book in which the author is narrating the effect of love upon him, and nothing more.

Giovanni Villani says. "... fece in sua giovanezza el libro della vita nuova d'amore..."³⁷ I do not think, as Cian did, that the chronicler meant "vita giovanile e amorosa."³⁸ It seems more likely that Villani added the word "d'amore" to explain the adjective "nuova" which did not seem clear by itself, thus anticipating our difficulties. In what sense was the life 'new'? In the sense that it was made new by love. And Villani was in a position to know what Dante meant by his title, for he was "amicus et sodus" of the poet, according to his nephew Filippo.³⁹

Possible as it is, therefore, that the name *Vita Nuova*

may have a double or even a triple meaning, and granted that Dante may not have been displeased to think that it conveyed more than one, still there ought to be no doubt that our first interpretation in its most usual form renders the all-important meaning, the appropriate meaning according to the author himself, beside which the others are negligible.

What, then, are we to say about "Questi fu tal ne la sua vita nova, ecc.," the passage in *Purgatorio* xxx? To me the arguments of Rajna and Barbi, already mentioned,⁴⁰ are convincing as far as this passage is concerned. "La sua vita nova" is here a chronological indication, and refers, as the context shows, to a period of Dante's life before the death of Beatrice that is distinguished from the period after her death. This first period corresponds exactly, as Flamini said, to that called 'adolescence' in the *Convivio*. Let us admit, then, that "vita nova" means 'adolescence', the period of promise, the gateway of youth. But does it not also refer to the book of that name? Professor McKenzie thinks not,⁴¹ but such a reference is not easily excluded. There can be no doubt that in the *Commedia*, as in the *Convivio*, it is assumed that the reader knows the "libello". Where Dante says: "Si come nella Vita Nuova si può vedere,"⁴² and "Quella gentile donna, cui feci menzione ne la fine de la Vita Nuova,"⁴³ and "E se ne la presente opera... più virilmente si trattasse che ne la Vita Nuova,"⁴⁴ he does not think it necessary to explain that "la Vita Nuova" is a book. How could any reader of the *Purgatorio* know in what sense Beatrice had been a guide to Dante, unless he had read the *Vita Nuova*, and if he had read it how could he help being reminded of it, seeing that the heroine of that book is here speaking of the state of things and events described and narrated in the book?⁴⁵

The purpose of the speech of Beatrice is to humiliate Dante, and no sting is spared to him. Her first words give

the tone of indignant irony which is maintained throughout, although it is milder in the next canto:

Come degnasti d'accedere al monte?
non sapei tu che qui è l'uom felice?⁴⁶

As if to say: 'With all your vaunted learning, how were you persuaded to condescend⁴⁷ to approach the mountain of Purgatory? Was it news to you that happiness dwells with innocence: that Adam and Eve, before they aspired to be as gods, were happy here?' The ironical tone again finds definite expression in her indictment uttered in the presence of the angels:

Quando di carne a spirto era salita,
e bellezza e virtù cresciuta m'era,
fu' io a lui men cara e men gradita,⁴⁸

and again in the next canto where she says :

e quali agevolezze o quali avanzi
ne la fronte de li altri si mostraro,
per che dovessi lor passeggiare anzi?⁴⁹

("were the other attractions so irresistible that you could not help strutting complacently before them?"), and where she says: "Alza la barba," as if to say: "Are you not old enough to know better?"⁵⁰

Ironical too is the contrast between the "novo augelletto" and the "pennuti" in verses 61 and 62, and the use of the word "pargoletta" in the lines:

Non ti dovea gravar le penne in giuso,
ad aspettar più colpi, o pargoletta
o altra vanità con sì breve uso.⁵¹

"Pargoletta" would be incomprehensible if it were not the word Dante had gracefully used in three of his love-lyrics, to which Beatrice is undoubtedly referring,⁵² and I think the choice of the words "la sua vita nova" must be explained in the same way. She is using his own words, the name he had himself given to the story of how the love of

her had kept him safe, to the book in which he confesses his first unfaithfulness and condemns himself unsparingly for it. Notice that, where she says:

Sì tosto come in su la soglia fui
di mia seconda etate e mutai vita,
questi si tolse a me, e diessi altrui,

she is evidently alluding to the episode of the 'donna gentile', and she does not mention his almost immediate repentance: she passes it over contemptuously because his repentance had been only temporary. But it was during that period of repentance that he wrote the *Vita Nuova*: no wonder the name of that book is bitter in her mouth! It is as if she had said: "This man gave such promise in his 'new life,' as he so admirably called it..." To ignore the irony of the reference is, I think, to omit something that can ill be spared.

While there is every reason for hesitating to understand a complicated meaning in the name of the book, there need be no such hesitation in supposing that "vita nova" in the *Purgatorio* has a double meaning. For the book *Vita Nuova* was an accomplished fact when the *Purgatorio* was written, a fact that could not fail to be present in the mind of both author and reader, and the use of those two words is bound to recall the book and its contents, with the meaning of the title, besides conveying the meaning 'youthful life' or 'adolescence', which it would be unreasonable to deny. "Vita nova" in the speech of Beatrice is a sophisticated and ambiguous expression, while the name *Vita Nuova* is simple and not ambiguous.

NOTES

1, p. 53. — E se ne la presente opera, la quale è Convivio nominata e vo' che sia, più virilmente si trattasse che ne la Vita Nuova, ecc. *Conv.* I, 1, 16. Cf. also *Conv.* II, 11, 1 and II, XII (XIII), 4.

2, p. 53. — It is also true that there is no Latin use of *novus* that

is not reflected by an Italian use of *nuovo*, and no Italian meaning of the adjective that is not implicit in one of the classical Latin meanings and therefore not to be expected in mediaeval Latin usage.

3, p. 53. — Federzoni 1, p. 412; 2, p. 17. He considers, however, that the particular meaning he advocates is included in the general meaning 'new' as different from the previous life, which he accepts. Similarly Pietrobono (Vol. I, 31-42) while emphasizing the mysterious nature of the new life, and citing examples in which the word obviously means 'strange', still declares that he attributes to the word *nuova* the meaning "che è più veramente suo e suona *vita novella*," which he calls "il suo significato ordinario" (p. 32). He means 'new' as different from the previous life. Davidson in *MLN*. XXIV (1909), 227 ss.

4, p. 54. — Davidson mentions nine examples, but two of them, "Canzone 3, line 5 of stanza 5" and "Sonnet 25, line 3" (of the Oxford edition), are unsatisfactory.

5, p. 54. — The objection of Barbi (*BSDII*. VIII, 264-66) that Federzoni's interpretation is not borne out by the use of the words *vita nova* in *Purg.* xxx, 115, does not seem formidable, for reasons which will appear later when that passage is discussed.

6, p. 54. — *V.N.* xvii, 1-2. Cf. also Parodi in *BSDII*. XIII, 245, n. 2, and Spiers in *MLN*. XXV, 36-39.

7, p. 54. — Gargano Cosenza, 81-82, following Biscioni, holds that the new life is that which begins with the development of reason about the age of nine, "...diversa dalla vita vegetativa che si è menata fino a quell' epoca..."

8, p. 55. — A good summary of most of the discussion is given in Melodia, ed. 5-8, "appendice alla nota 5."

9, p. 55. — *Purg.* xxx, 109-26.

10, p. 56. — Rajna in *BSDII*. V, 104.

11, p. 56. — Cf. also Barbi in *BSDII*. VIII, 265.

12, p. 56. — *Conv.* IV, xxiv, 3.

13, p. 57. — Flamini, ed. note 3.

14, p. 57. — *Conv.* IV, xxiv, 9.

15, p. 57. — *Conv.* IV, xxv, 1. In *Purg.* xxx, 42 he has mentioned "puerizia": — "prima ch' io fuor di puerizia fosse" — but, since adolescence cannot be the "seconda etade" of verse 125, it is evident that "puerizia" is included under adolescence as it is, without being mentioned, in the *Convivio*.

16, p. 57. — This objection is made by Casini (ed., pp. xxiii-xxiv). If "Vita Nuova," the title of the book, meant 'adolescence', it might still not mean the same period as that assigned to "adolescenzia" in the *Convivio*. The mediaeval tradition of the ages of man, medical, astrological and philosophical, is, in general, fairly consistent, but very inconsistent as regards the specific periods. "Adolescentia" is described as extending from the fourteenth to the twenty-fifth, twenty-eighth, or thirtieth year, and also from birth until the thirtieth year; sometimes it includes "pueritia", sometimes it is identical with "iuventus". Proto (GD. XX, 1912, 57), defending the interpretation 'youthful life', quotes Albertus Magnus as saying that the term "iuventus", although

commonly used for the virile period, belongs more properly to the same period as "pueritia". Elsewhere, however, Albertus makes "iuventus" begin with the sixteenth year and continue to the twenty-fourth, thirtieth or thirty-fifth year "secundum complexio-num diversitatem." Cf. Della Torre, 80-81, and his discussion of the whole tradition, 72-96.

Pascoli (126-30) thought that *vita nuova*, both in *Purg.* xxx and as the name of the book, means "adolescenza", but that Dante, at the time when he wrote the *Vita Nuova*, had not yet reached the conclusions as to the ages of man which are expressed in the *Convivio*, and was assigning nine years to "puerizia" and eighteen to "adolescenza", so that the latter would end with the twenty-seventh year. Pascoli cites *Conv.* iv, 21 as illustrating the period meant, during which the "appetito dell' animo," which springs from the seed of nobility, needs to be well cultivated.

17, p. 59. — Cf. Rajna, reviewing Wulff in *BSDII.* V, 103.

18, p. 59. — Kraus, 208.

19, p. 59. — *BSDII.* V, 127, and note 2, in which Rajna's review is referred to.

20, p. 60. — Scherillo, ed. 15-17.

21, p. 61. — Casini (ed. xxiii-xxv and p. 3, n. 1) accepts the interpretation 'youthful life', but at the same time implies that "vita nova" is ambiguous, for he points out that the *Proemio* distinguishes two periods, the second of which is the one intended: "dunque quella parte della quale Dante conservò in questo libretto i ricordi, è la seconda età della sua vita, cioè la giovinezza."

22, p. 61. — *Conv.* II, xii (xiii), 5.

23, p. 62. — *Conv.* I, x, 2.

24, p. 63. — Cf. *supra*, pp. 57-58.

25, p. 64. — D'Ancona, ed. 2.

26, p. 64. — *Conv.* III, viii, 20: "Dico adunque che queste fiammelle che piovono da la sua biltade... rompono li vizii innati, cioè connaturali, a dare a intendere che la sua bellezza ha podestade in *rinnovare natura* in coloro che la mirano; ch' è miracolosa cosa." Notice the expression "rinnovare natura."

27, p. 64. — Marigo, p. 51, n. 1. Salvadori (157) first cited *Romans* vi, 4.

28, p. 65. — D'Ancona, ed. 4.

29, p. 66. — *V.N.* xxi.

30, p. 66. — *Conv.* IV, xxii, 12.

31, p. 67. — I must be pardoned for repeating this fact, which needs to be kept in mind. For if the *Vita Nuova* were about other matters, there might be abundant reason for interpreting the title as meaning 'youthful life'. How pat, for example, would be a quotation like *Conv.* IV, xii, 15: "...così l'anima nostra, incontanente che nel nuovo e mai non fatto cammino di questa vita entra, dirizza li occhi al termine del suo sommo bene, ecc." "Nuovo" in addition to "mai non fatto" can hardly mean anything but 'fresh', 'incipient', i.e., different from what it is when, later, it has become familiar, otherwise "mai non fatto" would be a useless repetition. But here the author is speaking of the beginning of life, whereas the story of the *Vita Nuova* begins nine

years after the beginning of Dante's life: the latter deals with another life, a new life of love.

32, p. 67. — *Conv.* IV, xxi, 13.

33, p. 67. — *Conv.* IV, xxiii, 3.

34, p. 68. — *Conv.* III, viii, 20.

35, p. 68. — *Purg.* xviii, 22-27.

36, p. 69. — This subsequent life is described in the lines immediately following those I have cited: 28-33. The word "spirital" (verse 32) does not mean 'spiritual' in the modern sense; it means 'pneumatic' in the mediaeval sense, and is just as applicable to the movement of an evil desire as to that of a good one. Cf. Brett, Vol. II, p. 73.

37, p. 69. — Villani, lib. IX, cap. cxxxv, p. 146.

38, p. 69. — Cf. *supra*, pp. 59-60.

39, p. 69. — Cf. Della Torre in *GD.* XII, 33-44. Giovanni Villani was a neighbour of Dante's, living in a continuation of the same street. He was not more than eleven years older than the poet, and may have been less.

40, p. 70. — Cf. *supra*, p. 56 and n. 11.

41, p. 70. — Cf. McKenzie, ed. p. xii, where he also gives positive reasons for his sound opinion that "Vita Nuova" means "life renewed by the domination of love."

42, p. 70. — *Conv.* II, xii (xiii), 4.

43, p. 70. — *Conv.* II, ii, 1.

44, p. 70. — *Conv.* I, i, 16.

45, p. 70. — See Gualtieri, 48: "ma che intende dire colle parole — nella sua vita nova? Certamente, in quel tempo, di cui egli parla nel libro intitolato *Vita Nova*."

46, p. 71. — *Purg.* xxx, 74-75.

47, p. 71. — *Degnare* as an intransitive verb is always used by Dante to mean 'deign', 'condescend'. Cf., among other examples, *Purg.* I, 84. It is used transitively once in *Purg.* xxi, 20: "Se voi siete ombre che Dio su non degni," where some have interpreted: "non reputi degne," cf., e.g., Vandelli, ed. But the adverb *su* shows that the whole expression "su non degni" is a shortening of *non degni di ammettere lassù*, so that *degnare* seems to have no peculiar meaning here. Gualtieri (45-46), referring to this latter example, interpreted "Come degnasti, ecc." as meaning "Come! tu peccatore (indegno per ciò di questo luogo felice) accettasti (quando Virgilio t'invitò) di accedere al monte?" which leaves one in doubt whether "accettasti" is meant to imply condescension or rashness. I have not been able to see Medin, A., *Due chiose dantesche*. Padova, Randi, 1898.

48, p. 71. — *Purg.* xxx, 127-29.

49, p. 71. — *Purg.* xxxi, 28-30.

50, p. 71. — *Purg.* xxxi, 68.

51, p. 71. — *Purg.* xxxi, 59.

52, p. 71. — Cf. Mantovani, 26. Ortiz, 35-36.

III

EGO TANQUAM CENTRUM CIRCULI

Dante's pressing attentions to the second lady 'of the defence', whom he had courted by the command of Love, had caused their names to be coupled in the exaggerated comments of malicious gossips who, it seems, ascribed dishonest intentions to the young poet.¹ Beatrice, who was aware that his attitude toward herself was not that of a mere acquaintance,² took warning from the unpleasant experience of the other lady, and declined to recognize Dante on meeting him:³ in Dante's words, "mi negò lo suo dolcissimo salutare, ne lo quale stava tutta la mia beatitudine."⁴ We are allowed to understand that, notwithstanding the intense emotions aroused in him by her first appearance and when she greeted him, he had not, up to this time, realized that not only his moments of ecstasy but all his happiness depended upon her favour; otherwise he would not have been willing to conceal his shy aspiration beneath the more worldly courtship of the first lady 'of the defence', which lasted for years and months,⁵ nor would he have so eagerly embraced the opportunity of laying siege to the second lady — and there may have been others. But now he realized how indispensable was to him the gracious salutation of the lady of whom he had always thought more highly than of any other — the kindly regard of her who had always occupied a superior place in his imagination, a place inaccessible to anyone

else, no matter how charming all of the other fifty-nine beauties of Florence may have been.⁶

He seeks a lonely place to reflect and weep, and then retiring to his bedroom, where unheard he can cry to Beatrice for pity and to his patron Love for help, he falls asleep like a whipped child, exhausted. And as he sleeps he seems to see sitting beside the bed, watching him gravely and absorbed in thought, a youth dressed in white clothing, whom he does not recognise until the latter sighs and says to him: "My son, it is time that our disguises be put off." At the words "my son" comes recognition. The visitor is Love, who has often spoken so to him before. Dante becomes aware that Love is weeping, and addressing him by his proper title, since love is the traditional source of all worth,⁷ asks: "Lord of nobility, why weepest thou?" Then comes the answer: "*Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent circumferentie partes; tu autem non sic.*" Impressive words and very obscure! The poet takes time to reflect upon them, but cannot understand. How is Love like the centre of a circle, and Dante not so? How does that explain why Love is weeping? These are the questions that we too shall have to try to answer. At last Dante makes up his mind to ask for the explanation he cannot find, but Love replies, this time in Italian: "Ask no more than is useful for thee."⁸

Obediently Dante dismisses the puzzling words from his mind, and enquires why Beatrice has ceased to greet him, and Love explains the lady's motive, and then unfolds the plan he has himself devised by which "*Quella nostra Beatrice,*" "that source of our beatitude," may be convinced that Dante is her faithful lover and innocent of the misconduct attributed to him by people who have been deceived by appearances. Dante is to write a poem in which he will explain the true state of things, and protest that he has been her faithful servant since he was a child. He is to call Love as witness, and Love himself, who knows the truth, will testify on his behalf.

We are concerned with the meaning of the obscure sentence in Latin, but interpretation of it should not be attempted until one has formed as clear an idea as possible of the relation of this episode in the *Vita Nuova* to the preceding and subsequent parts of the story.

The *Vita Nuova* is the story of Dante's education in love, written by himself. He is tracing for us the history of the growth in his mind of the idea of love, and of his understanding of the relation between him and Beatrice, from the time when the affection for her was first aroused in his breast to the time when the book was composed. The author comprehends the full significance of everything he tells us in the book, but he represents himself, the hero or protagonist of the story, as passing by degrees from ignorance about love and Beatrice to that full comprehension which he now has.

There are three Dantes to be considered in studying the *Vita Nuova*. There is first the Dante who expresses himself in the verse at the different stages of his education, arranged in chronological order by the author. Secondly there is the Dante who is the protagonist, the hero of the prose narrative. Thirdly there is Dante the author of the book.

The author wishes the reader to understand the stages by which he has come to comprehend the events of his "new life," but he is somewhat hampered by the method he has chosen of explaining those events: a prose narrative connecting selected poems. He believes — and his belief is such a conviction that we may say he *knows* — that the life of Beatrice, from her birth to her death, was foreordained for his own salvation. In the light of this knowledge his recollection of the impression made upon him by her first and second apparition, and by her salutation at other times, is magnified and glorified, and every circumstance related to her becomes full of significance. At the same time he is aware that in the first years of his *Vita Nuova* he was unconscious of the real importance of his relation

to her. He remembers that, in those years, while he reserved a chapel in his mind dedicated to her and carefully hidden from the curiosity of the vulgar, he otherwise lived a life apparently unaffected by Beatrice, and courted other ladies. He believes, however, that all the events of those years were providentially ordered, and that his courtship of other ladies was required by the necessity of preserving the exclusive secrecy of his reverential attitude toward "the lady of his mind," and to lead him to the understanding of the peculiar preciousness of his love for her. Accordingly, when he writes the story, he gives us an account of what really happened to him according to the knowledge he now has, allowing us to see at the same time that the early part of his education in love was largely unconscious.⁹ He tells us that he chose the first lady 'of the defence' to protect his secret adoration of Beatrice, and this may have been his real motive at the time; but he also tells us that the courtship of that lady lasted for years and months, and that, during this period, he wrote poetry for her, but none, apparently, for Beatrice, thus allowing us to see that the secret cult for Beatrice was not actively preponderant. At the same time he insists that some of the poems written for the other lady were unconsciously affected by the idea of Beatrice. The author would have us believe that the "serventese" in honour of the sixty beauties was composed in order to celebrate Beatrice, and we have no way of judging whether Dante the protagonist was really conscious or unconscious of this motive, but we may believe that Dante the author is sure that the motive subsisted,¹⁰ and the same can be said of the motive for the sonnets of chapter VIII, on the death of a friend of Beatrice. Less convincing is the motive attributed to the protagonist for the writing of "O voi che per la via" in chapter VII, that is, that he wrote it for the protection of his secret, and it may be that here the author has conceded to the exigencies of the unity of his narrative a little more than

he was himself convinced of. Even so, however, the concession is small, for it is quite possible that the poem was composed in fulfilment of the requirements of the convention which demanded a lamentation on the departure of the lady. As for the second lady 'of the defence', mentioned in the ninth and tenth chapters, how far the protagonist is conscious of her function as a "screen" is not made clear by the author, who, although evidently convinced that this courtship was as necessary for his education as the preceding one, nevertheless allows us to see clearly that, in this love-affair also, the protagonist was a very willing executor of the commands of Love.

All the episodes of the *Vita Nuova* represent stages in the education of the hero: at any one of these stages he appears as understanding more of the subject, love, than he knew in the earlier stages, and less than he will know in the later. And the reader is learning in a somewhat similar way, for although the author has confided much to him at the very beginning, and continues to allow him more light than the protagonist has, the author does not tell him everything at once: to do so would be to spoil the story. The reader is made aware from the beginning that Dante is being miraculously guided, and he is informed early that the loves for other ladies are subsidiary to the love for Beatrice, and necessary to the education of the hero, who is not actually conscious of this fact. Thanks to the confidences of the author, the reader is able to grasp the significance of the events more quickly than the hero, and so he keeps ahead of the latter in information, but he too needs to be led gradually to an understanding of the full significance of Dante's love for Beatrice. As we begin to read the work we find that at one extreme of knowledge is Dante the author, who knows everything; at the other is the Dante of the poems, who knows nothing except the emotions he is expressing; between the extremes is the protagonist, the Dante of the prose narrative, who knows

more than the Dante of the poems, but not as much as the reader, and far less than Dante the author, although here and there the author, in his desire to inform the reader, seems to endow his hero with more knowledge than seems reasonably probable. By the time we have come to the sonnet "Amore e'l cor gentil" in the twentieth chapter, we realise that the Dante of the poems has caught up with the protagonist and both of them with the reader, and the author alone is ahead; and when the book is finished the three Dantes are one in knowledge, having outstripped the reader, who is lagging somewhat and looking back to pick up information he may have missed.

The four apparitions, in this book, of Love personified are typical episodes. He first appears¹¹ as a terrifying lord, whose gaiety soon changes to mourning. In the verse he pays no attention to Dante; in the prose he says: "Ego dominus tuus." He feeds the frightened Beatrice, whom he holds in his arms, with Dante's heart, and then carries her away. Neither she nor Dante have anything to say as to what is done with them. Love is the master, the patron of lovers traditional in the erotic lyric. He is the terrible passion described by Cavalcanti, which begins as delighted contemplation of the beloved object, in the memory and imagination, and ends in violent disorganisation of the life of the lover. He is a power outside the lovers, who are unable to resist or control him. In the verse he has no ethical character, he is neither good nor bad, but the hero of the prose has the impression that Love, as he departed, was carrying the lady toward heaven,¹² and the reader has been definitely told in the previous chapter that, although Love ruled Dante absolutely from the beginning, it was nevertheless a most noble influence, always accompanied by the faithful counsel of reason,¹³ and in this chapter the reader receives the hint that the vision is a prophecy of the coming departure of Beatrice from earth.¹⁴

The second apparition of Love, as related in the sonnet of the ninth chapter, is when Dante, riding melancholy on an unwelcome journey, sees him on foot, in the poor garb of a traveller, coming to meet him with a dejected countenance. Love announces to him that he is bearing Dante's heart from the distant residence of the lady to whom Love had confided it, to another lady who, apparently, lives in Florence.¹⁵ Love then vanishes absorbed into Dante.

The poem is little more than the conventional announcement of a new flame, and the prose, as well as the verse, in this chapter, represents Love as the traditional patron of lovers. The prose, however, is careful to preserve the view of the author confided to the reader and attributed to the protagonist in the preceding chapters — the view that the love for the distant lady and for the new lady were screens for his love for Beatrice — by speaking of those affections as "*difesa*" and "*difensione*"; the prose too adds the significant information, for which the reader has been prepared in the prose of the preceding chapters, that Dante's melancholy upon this journey was due to his absence from Beatrice, and it is implied, but not definitely stated, that the hero was aware that this was the cause of his sadness.¹⁶

The account of the third apparition of Love in the twelfth chapter is all in prose: the Dante of the poems is being temporarily outdistanced by the hero who, in this chapter, is to have an entirely new experience. This experience occurs when Beatrice has denied him her salutation, after which event the author interposes to describe to the reader the extraordinary effects of that salutation upon the protagonist whenever he was privileged to receive it.

The hero has hitherto been acquainted with Love as the masterful Lord who overwhelms him in the presence of Beatrice, and as the patron of lovers who transfers his heart from one lady to another with the pretext of the conventional "*schermo*". He himself has been content

enough with that pretext, and has allowed himself to be swayed by these apparently external and irresistible influences without enquiring into the difference between them or into their real nature. And now he is unable to recognize the thoughtful youth in spotless white clothing who sits beside his bed gazing upon him. Not until he hears the words "Fili mi" does he realise that this is the same Love, his master and patron who has often before called him "my son." But how different is the appearance of this youthful, angelic being! I say "angelic" because one cannot help being reminded of that other youth "clothed in a long white garment" who appeared to Mary Magdalen and the others, in the holy sepulchre. In the *Convivio* Dante interprets the latter angel as representing "nobility", the nobility that is the subject of the fourth book,¹⁷ and since, in this passage of the *Vita Nuova*, Dante addresses Love, as soon as he recognises him, as "Signore de la nobiltade" we may reasonably suppose that both figures were suggested by the angel of the sepulchre. This youthful angelic being addresses the hero as "my son" in order to enable him to identify the new apparition with those he has known before, but when Dante does identify it and recognises Love, he is still so impressed by the immaculate and pensive dignity of his lord that he fears to address him.

"Fili mi," says the lovely person, "tempus est ut pretermictantur simulacra nostra": it is time to discard our former images. The possessive *nostra* is worth noting. I think he means by "simulacra nostra"¹⁸ not only the extraneous loves of Dante for the ladies of the "defence", but also the forms in which he, Love, has hitherto appeared to him, the modes in which Dante has hitherto imagined Love — the peremptory master and the heart-peddling patron. In the two former apparitions Love is represented as a power commanding the lover from without, disposing of his heart, of Beatrice, and of the other two ladies, without considering the desires of Dante, his pleasure or his pain.

The novelty of the third apparition resides not only in the new beauty and holiness of it, but in its greater affinity to Dante himself, so that it is a proper representation of the poet's own feelings. This new person is affectionate and sympathetic; he is weeping as was Dante when he fell asleep; he is concerned about no one else except "*quella nostra Beatrice*"; and his counsel is the same that Dante's own heart would naturally have given him: to write a poem of apology and let his own love testify to his sincerity. From now on Dante and Love will together discard the false and partial representations of love which have served their purpose, and they can do this together because Love is no other than Dante's own holy love for Beatrice, his only real love, and a love that is within him and part of him.

In this third interview with Love, as a result of his loss of the salutation of Beatrice, the hero is shown as beginning to perceive three things which become clear to him only later: — First, he is beginning to feel the truth of what before was to him only a theory,¹⁹ that his devotion to Beatrice has always been his only true love, and that the other loves have never been more than imitations. Secondly, he is beginning to realize the peculiar holiness of this love of his, and the significance of his previous experiences whenever he met Beatrice and was privileged to receive her salutation — the "*fiamma di caritade*" mentioned in the previous chapter. Thirdly, he is beginning to have an inkling of the truth that there is no real love except that which grows up in one's heart as the natural expression of the goodness of one's character, and that, consequently, both the fashionable tradition and the Cavalcantian theory of love are erroneous.

From now on the hero will tend more and more in the direction of Guinizelli's view of love, and before long he will embrace it whole-heartedly. It may be that the expression "*Segnore de la nobiltade*" is a first indication of this

tendency, although that expression does not disagree with the orthodox tradition. Certainly there is nothing about morality in Cavalcanti's famous poetical treatise on love: the nearest approach to Guinizelli's doctrine of the essential unity of goodness and love is in the words: " — ancor di lui vedrai — Che 'n gente di valor lo più si trova,"²⁰ and it is peculiarly Guinizellian teaching that love, which is the proudest possession of the noble heart, the flame upon the candle, the diamond in the mine, is a quality of the individual, not an influence from without, which may assail anyone.²¹ Apart from the fact already mentioned that in this third interview Love acts and speaks as if he were Dante's own love, and not like a master of lovers, there is what seems to me conclusive evidence that Love is here intended to represent Dante's own good love for Beatrice and nothing more.

At the end of this same twelfth chapter the author, commenting on the personification of the 'ballata', promises to explain that figure later on, when he will also explain another more important matter of a similar kind.²² He fulfils his promise in chapter xxv, which is a commentary on the sonnet *Io mi senti' svegliar* addressed to Guido Cavalcanti. It is the well-known defence of the personification of love, but it has not been generally understood that the author is not so much concerned to defend his right to use an ancient rhetorical figure as to make clear that the figure is only a rhetorical device. The 'ballata' of chapter xii was not really a person, and neither is love, and, more important still, there is no love except as it exists in a lover. Love is an individual quality, and universal love is an abstraction that can have no real separate existence: "Potrebbe qui dubitare persona degna da dichiararle onne dubitazione, e dubitare potrebbe di ciò, che io dico d'Amore come se fosse una cosa per sè...; la quale cosa, secondo la veritate è falsa; ch'Amore non è per sè sì come sustanzia, ma è uno accidente in sustanzia."²³

I think the reason why this explanation is deferred until chapter xxv is that the author wishes to wait until he has brought his hero to a complete understanding of the ideas that are presented to him in chapter xii. It is evident that in chapter xii the latter does not understand them, but that they are really presented to him there is confirmed by the contents of chapters xiii to xxiv. Immediately after the third interview the hero is plunged into the "battaglia de li diversi pensieri,"²⁴ a serious but troubled investigation of the nature of love, which is debated *ab ovo* in chapter xiii: whether love is good or not good, that is, whether Guinizelli or Cavalcanti is right; the apparent gentleness of love which seems inconsistent with its violence; the difference between Beatrice and other ladies. In the following three chapters, spurred by the painful incident of the "gabbo", he studies searchingly the qualities of his love and its effects upon him: its endurance in spite of the suffering incurred by it, and the passionate "oscure qualità" which humiliate him and are always annihilated by the sight of the lady herself, so that in chapter xvii he has already decided to abandon the siege. In the eighteenth chapter the light shines steadily, showing the calm after the storm and the happiness of a love which has surrendered all its demands and which, in the nineteenth, finds its expression in the first religious poem of the *Vita Nuova*, not, however, without a remnant of the previous longings, and not without a lingering hope that the lady will still be kind. It is significant, incidentally, that in chapter xviii the convention of secrecy is practically abandoned, for the ladies with whom the poet speaks know that Beatrice is the object of his love. And then comes the explicit confession of faith in the doctrine of Guinizelli: "Amore e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa": love is altogether good, it is the goodness of a man's heart seeking the goodness in the beloved object.

The experiences of the hero in chapters xxi to xxiii,

which lead him to a still more religious conception of love than before, need not be considered here. It is sufficient for the present purpose to point out that the fourth apparition of Love, in chapter xxiv, is hardly an apparition at all, for although it is said that there came to the hero "una imaginazione d'Amore; che mi parve vederlo venire da quella parte ove la mia donna stava," it is in the hero's own heart that Love speaks to him: "E pareami che lietamente mi dicesse nel cor mio, ecc." There is no longer any pretence that Love is anything but Dante's own love for Beatrice, in fact Love identifies himself with the influence of Beatrice, advising the hero to call her by the same name: "E chi volesse sottilmente considerare, quella Beatrice chiamerebbe Amore per molta somiglianza che ha meco."²⁵ Nor is there, of course, any doubt as to the goodness of love. All misgivings and doubts have long since been definitely routed, and the gladness of Dante's heart testifies to the peace within it: "E certo me pareva avere lo cuore sì lieto, che non pareva che fosse lo mio cuore..." Also the convention of secrecy has been completely abandoned and the lady is openly identified as "monna Bice."²⁶

To recapitulate: — The first two apparitions of Love represent him as the Cavalcantian masterful and unethical passion of external origin, and as the conventional patron of loves and lovers, an abstract being which becomes concrete when it seizes upon a man and makes him a lover. The third apparition represents the Guinizellian love, an individual emotion existing in each noble heart, altogether good, and having no abstract subsistence: in this case, therefore, it is Dante's own good love. The fourth apparition represents the same love as the third, but in the fourth this love has, after much struggling and tormenting experience, become familiar and acceptable to the mind of the hero, whereas in the third it was to him strange and hardly comprehensible.

Returning to that third apparition, which is the one

that concerns us: Dante's own good love for Beatrice²⁷ assures him that he is innocent of the charges that gossiping rumour has laid to him. These charges are "parole de li ingannati."²⁸ Love himself is witness of his innocence: "...voglio che tu dichì certe parole per rima, ne le quali tu comprendi la forza che io tegno sopra te per lei, e come tu fosti suo tostamente da la tua puerizia. E di ciò chiama testimonio colui che lo sa ..." In the words of the ballata: "tosto fu vostro, e mai non s'è smagato."²⁹ It may be that the words of the poem, translated into English, mean no more than "my heart tells me that I have never really loved anyone but you," the familiar untrustworthy assertion of the lover, but that is not true of the prose words spoken by Love, which express the feeling of the protagonist, and correspond to the intention of the author. We must therefore dismiss from our minds any possible suspicion that Dante has been in any way guilty of unfaithfulness to Beatrice. Nor is Love at all guilty either: he accepts the responsibility for the expedients of "defence" and announces that the former images of love must now be discarded, but he has no word of repentance.³⁰ The supposition that Love is repentant here, which has been entertained by some, is due to the circumstance that he is weeping. Dante too has wept much over his rejection by Beatrice, and feels that he himself has abundant cause for tears, but being unable as yet to grasp the fact that this angelic being is his own love for Beatrice, he wonders that Love should weep. His words, "Segnore de la nobiltade, e perchè piangi tu?" are equivalent to: 'I have evident cause to weep, but why shouldst *thou*, who art presumably superior to the sufferings of an individual lover like me, why shouldst *thou* weep?' The answer to this question is the sentence which we are to try to interpret.

Love says: "I am like the centre of a circle, to which the parts of the circumference are similarly related."

Dante has lost the kindly regard of Beatrice because of his attentions to another lady. He knows that he has had other loves beside that for Beatrice, but nevertheless he feels that he has not been unfaithful to her. Why? Because, from the time when they first met, he has never forgotten her, and the other loves — which he has always considered as inferior to his love for her, because she has always remained “the lady of his mind” — have served the purpose of allowing him to worship her in secret without degrading her to the level of the others in the eyes of the world. In this sense his love for Beatrice has been responsible for the other loves: it is his love for her that justifies the other loves, and that is why, in the interview we are considering, Love absolves him from all guilt and assumes all responsibility. But now that the other affections are no longer useful, and have become dangerous, it is time to abandon them, and it is time too for the hero’s old ideas about love, which are associated with those other love-affairs, to be abandoned: “tempus est, etc.” They were only imitations, images of love. Now that Love has appeared in its real character, as Dante’s own good love for Beatrice, it is time to recognize it as the only real love, to which all other affections of the hero, no matter how inevitable, are equally inferior.

Love, who has discarded his “*simulacra*”, says that he is like the centre of a circle. And since Love is Dante’s own love for Beatrice, the circle can be no other than the circle of Dante’s affections. His love for Beatrice is like the centre of that circle, the circumference of which passes through many points, all similarly related to the centre: it is to these various points that Dante’s other affections are compared. The points on the circumference are not the centre, and Dante’s other affections are not Love, but those points are all similarly related to his love for Beatrice, that is to Love.

Love says: “*tu autem non sic.*” “But it is otherwise

with thee." Dante is not like the centre of a circle: he is like a circle. If his love for Beatrice is like the centre of a circle of affections, it follows that he himself is like a circle that contains such a centre, and which also contains other points that are like his other affections. "Tu autem non sic," however, cannot be a reproach, as has been sometimes supposed. A circle the centre of which is noble Love is a noble circle, and the points on its circumference, though they be inferior to the centre, are not ignoble. Dante's other affections, inferior though they be to his love for Beatrice, are nevertheless justified by his love for Beatrice, they are nothing to be ashamed of.

But, if neither Love nor Dante have anything to be ashamed of, why does Love weep? and if the interpretation I have just given be accepted, how is "Ego tanquam centrum, etc." a proper answer to the question: "Why weepst thou?" It is an appropriate answer because Love is Dante's own love for Beatrice, and is therefore affected by Dante's misfortune which he shares. Just as in the canzone *Donna pietosa* of chapter xxiii, where the poem is written with the same degree of knowledge as is that of the protagonist, love weeps *in the heart of the poet*,³¹ so here Love weeps for the same reason that has caused the hero to fall asleep weeping: the loss of the salutation of Beatrice. It is as if Love had said: 'I weep because I am not as thou hast hitherto supposed, a being separate from thee. I am thine own love for Beatrice, part of thyself, and I am weeping over our common loss. I am like the centre of a circle, but thou art like a circle which contains that centre and also inevitably contains other points which are not the centre'.

The hero does not understand the obscure figurative language: he will come to understand it only after he has studied the nature of love in the light of his own experience. For the present he drops the matter and listens to the advice of Love as to how he is to act in this crisis. Beatrice has misjudged him: she does not know that his love for

her is his only real love, that it is the centre of the circle. She has been deceived by the "parole de li ingannati," and thinks that Dante's affection for her, of which she is aware,³² is only one of a series, that it is a point on the circumference of the circle. (No wonder Love weeps at such a degradation.)³³ It is necessary to acquaint her with the true state of things, and the only way to convince her is to let his love speak for him, and trust to its eloquence.

I have explained the obscure words of our passage in the light derived from the story of the *Vita Nuova* itself, from the position of the episode in which the words occur with regard to preceding and subsequent episodes. It may seem strange that I have not mentioned any of the many examples of the illustration of the circle and its centre, employed for various purposes by religious, moral, and philosophical writers with whose works Dante may have been to some extent acquainted at the time of writing. The reasons why I have refrained from using these examples are three: — First, the *Vita Nuova* is sufficient by itself to explain our passage clearly and satisfactorily to me. Secondly, there is no way of telling whether, and to what extent, Dante was acquainted with those examples at the time of writing, if we except an example in Boethius' *Consolation*. Thirdly, the use of those examples by others has not resulted in any satisfactory solution of the problem, but has injected confusion into the discussion.

However, in spite of its later date, Dante's own quotation from Aristotle in the *Convivio* deserves to be compared with our passage, because the circle with its centre is there used as an example of something 'perfect', that is, 'noble' according to the poet's own definition of nobility, and because the epithet applied to Love in our passage, "Segnore de la nobiltade," immediately after which occurs the sentence "Ego tanquam centrum, etc.," suggests that Dante may have had the Aristotelian illustration in mind.

“Questa perfezione intende lo Filosofo nel settimo della Fisica quando dice: ‘Ciascuna cosa è massimamente perfetta quando tocca e aggiugne la sua virtude propria, e allora è massimamente secondo sua natura; onde allora lo circolo si può dicere perfetto quando veramente è circolo’, cioè quando aggiugne la sua propria virtude; e allora è in tutta sua natura, e allora si può dire nobile circolo. E questo è quando in esso uno punto, lo quale equalmente distante sia da la circonferenza, [equalmente] sua virtute parte per lo circolo; [chè lo circolo] che ha figura d’uovo non è nobile, nè quello che ha figura di presso che piena luna, però che non è in quello sua natura perfetta. E così manifestamente vedere si può che generalmente questo vocabolo, cioè nobiltade, dice in tutte cose perfezione di loro natura...”³⁴

The words of this passage in the *Convivio* are a useful commentary to our passage in the *Vita Nuova*, and confirm the interpretation given of the latter, for according to that interpretation the “Lord of Nobility” who is speaking is Dante’s noble love for Beatrice which ennobles the whole circle of his affections, and in the *Convivio* it is said that not only does the presence of a centre prove that the circle is perfect, but also it is the centre that makes the circle irreproachable by diffusing its goodness — that is, its virtue — throughout the circle: “equalmente sua virtute parte per lo circolo.”

None of the other examples of the illustration which have from time to time been mentioned as throwing light upon our passage are wholly applicable to it.

Boethius compares the centre to the providence of God, and the circumference, of concentric circles at varying distances, to fate, that is, to the result produced by Providence; and in a single sentence he suggests several other suitable analogies: “Igitur uti est ad intellectum ratiocinatio, ad id quod est, id quod gignitur, ad eternitatem tempus, ad punctum medium circulus, ita est fati series mobilis ad

providentie stabilem simplicitatem."³⁵ The commentary attributed to St. Thomas, summarizing the same conceit, uses the figure for the Creator and the created world, and also for God and the truth.³⁶

St. Thomas Aquinas uses the illustration for eternity and time, and also compares the centre to God. Points which are parts of a line, he says, are like moments of time, — past, present, and future, — no one of them can be at all the parts of the line, but a point outside the line may contemplate equally all the points in the line, and so is like eternity: — "*ut patet in circulo, cuius centrum cum sit indivisibile aequaliter respicit omnes circumferentiae partes et omnes quodammodo sibi sunt praesentes, licet non una earum alteri. Sic igitur Deus; qui de aeternitatis excelso omnia respicit, super totum temporis decursum et omnia quae geruntur in tempore praesentialiter intuetur...*"³⁷

The works of the Pseudo Dionysius make frequent use of the circle to represent divine love and love of all kinds in the universe, and it is always implied that the centre of the circle represents God; for example: — "*Qua in re et fine et principio se carere divinus amor excellenter ostendit, tanquam sempiternus circulus, propter bonum, ex bono, in bono, et ad bonum indeclinabili conversione circumiens, in eodem, et secundum idem, et procedens semper, et manens, et remeans.*"³⁸ Thus love is not only the love of God, but of all creatures, since they reciprocate it and in it "live, move and have their being": "*Amorem, sive divinum, sive angelicum, sive spiritalem, sive animale, sive naturalem dixerimus, vim quamdam sive potestatem copulantem et commiscentem intelligamus, etc...* Age, vero, his iterum in unum collectis, dicamus, unam esse simplicem virtutem, per se moventem unitivam quamdam mistionem ex bono usque ad extremum eorum quae existunt, et ab illo rursus consequenter per omnia ad bonum, ex seipsam per seipsam, et in seipsa seipsam revolvantem, et ad seipsam semper eodem modo revertentem."³⁹

How ancient and widespread was the use of the illustration of the circle and its centre to represent God and the universe, unity and multiplicity, is best shown in a recent illuminating article by Beck,⁴⁰ where he notes in Alanus de Insulis, in Alexander of Hales and in Bonaventura the words derived from the writings of Hermes Trismegistos:

Deus est spæra intelligibilis, cujus
centrum ubique, circumferentia nusquam.

The illustration was used by the ancient Egyptians, and, more important still, he shows us how it was used by Gioachino da Flora, in his *Expositio in Apocalipsim* and *Psalterium decem cordarum*, who derived it from the Jewish *Kabbala*. Considering the popularity of the prophecies of Gioachino in Franciscan circles, — as appears, for example, from the frequent discussion of them in the chronicle of Fra Salimbene, — it is quite likely that, at the time when he wrote the *Vita Nuova*, Dante knew something about them, and he certainly knew of the use of the circle to represent God, for he would at any rate find it in Boethius.

In view, however, of *Convivio* II, XII (XIII), where the poet describes his laborious introduction into the study of philosophy by means of the *Consolation* and the *Laelius*, before which he had had to rely on his mother wit, it is impossible to suppose that at that time he had already studied carefully either the works of the heretical abbot or those of the Pseudo Dionysius or any other theologian or philosopher. He no doubt had in mind some, if not all, of the passages mentioned, when he imagined that small luminous point in the twenty-eighth canto of the *Paradiso* as a symbol of God in his eternity surrounded by the circles of the angelic triumph, which represent the age (aevum), that is, angelic eternity;⁴¹ but we are concerned with the *Vita Nuova*, not with the *Commedia*, and to suppose that "Amore", in the twelfth chapter of the early

work, represents God, is forbidden by more than one cogent reason. "Amore" weeps; he is interested in nothing but the estrangement of Dante from Beatrice, and discusses it intimately with the hero; he devises a plan for their reconciliation, a plan which proves to be a complete failure; and when, in chapter xxv, the personification of love in this chapter is explained, it is said that "Amore" is an "accidente in sustanzia." ⁴²

And yet, although I cannot believe that "Amore," in our episode, is intended to represent God, and although it should be borne in mind that the illustration of the circle and its centre was a common one and used for various purposes, ⁴³ still its association with God and the creation was so well established and apparently so widely understood that it may easily have occurred to the mind of our poet. It is possible, I think, that when he was writing this twelfth chapter he was thinking of Guinizelli's famous canzone, in the fifth stanza of which the Bolognese poet compares the lady and the lover to God and the angel. The angel moves his sphere in obedience to the will of God, and thus circles about his Creator, and

- così d'adovra 'l vero
la bella donna— poi che 'n gli occhi sprende
de l'om gentil— talento,
che mai da le' obedir non si disprende.⁴⁴

It may well have been these lines that suggested to Dante the propriety of using the famous illustration to represent himself and his love for Beatrice.

St. Thomas Aquinas, commenting on the words in Aristotle's *Ethics* : "Ideo et difficile studiosum esse. In unoquoque enim medium accipere difficile, puta circuli medium non cuius libet, sed scientis, etc.," says:

"Concludit ex preostensis quod difficile est esse studiosum idest virtuosum. Quia in omnibus hoc videmus, quod accipere medium difficile est, declinare autem a medio est facile. Sicut accipere medium in circulo non est cuius libet,

sed scientis, idest geometre. Declinare autem a centro quilibet potest et faciliter."⁴⁵

And again:

"Et similiter peccatum in actione humana contingit quicumque circumstantiarum inordinate se habeat qualitercumque, vel secundum superabundantiam, vel secundum defectum. Sed rectitudo eius non erit nisi in omnibus circumstantiis debito modo ordinatis... Et inde est quod peccare est facile, quia multipliciter hoc contingit. Sed recte agere est difficile, quia non contingit nisi uno modo. Et ponitur exemplum, quia facile est et recedere a contactu signi, idest puncti, sive in centro circuli, sive in quacumque alia superficie determinate signati, quia hoc contingit infinitis modis."⁴⁶

The subject of these comments is the difficulty of right conduct. Aristotle's definition of virtue as the choice of the mean between extremes is understood, and this mean is compared to the centre of a circle which is hard to find. Right conduct is difficult because there is only one right way and many wrong ways, just as it is hard to hit a single mark or point, and easy to miss it. If we were to apply these sayings to the interpretation of our passage we should have to understand that Love is like the centre of a circle because he is virtuous love, and that Dante is not like the centre because he is not virtuous, having missed the central point which is equivalent to the "golden mean" between extremes. It would have to be supposed that to be unlike the centre of a circle is the same thing as to miss the centre which is being aimed at, — a clumsy supposition, — and also that "tu autem non sic" is a reproof administered to a guilty person.

It is not necessary to insist on the improbability that the author of the *Vita Nuova*, at the time when the book was composed, was acquainted with St. Thomas' commentary on the *Ethics*. But the circle and its centre was, as we have seen, a common illustration used for various purposes,

and the sentences quoted above from St. Thomas are inappropriate to our passage because it is plain that, throughout the whole episode of the twelfth chapter, Love is justifying Dante completely, and there is no hint of admission of guilt of any kind. Dante, since he is a human being, must necessarily have a number of affections, but none of them constitutes any unfaithfulness to Beatrice, or is derogatory to his character: the "soverchievole voce che pareache m'infamasse viziosamente"⁴⁷ is entirely mistaken, and the Lord of Nobility himself is witness that the *circumstantiae* of Dante's noble love have been *debito modo ordinatae*.⁴⁸

There is, however, a passage at the end of Cicero's *Laelius* which would be fresh in Dante's mind, if — as is possible but not certain — he had finished reading the *De Amicitia* by the time he came to write this twelfth chapter of the *Vita Nuova*. It characterizes virtuous love as stable, constant, properly related to its surroundings, and above all as unselfish, seeking nothing in return, like Dante's love when he has made up his mind to be content with the praise of his lady. It is appropriate to our passage because, as we have seen, the apparition of Love that we are considering represents the first dawning upon the mind of the hero of the *Vita Nuova* of that consciousness of an altogether superior and unselfish love for Beatrice which becomes plain to him in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth chapters of the book, that is, when he becomes convinced of the truth of Guinizelli's doctrine.

Virtus, virtus, inquam, C. Fanni, et tu, Q. Muci, et conciliat amicitias et conservat. In ea est enim convenientia rerum, in ea stabilitas, in ea constantia; quae cum se extulit et ostendit suum lumen et idem aspexit adgnovitque in alio, ad id se admovet vicissimque accipit illud, quod in altero est; ex quo exardescit sive amor sive amicitia; utrumque enim dictum est ab amando; amare autem nihil est aliud nisi eum ipsum diligere quem ames, nulla indigentia, nulla utilitate quaesita; quae tamen exflorescit ex amicitia, etiamsi tu eam minus secutus sis.⁴⁹

Thou hast called me "Lord of Nobility" says Love, and I am indeed noble. But I am not, as thou hast supposed, a separate substance, apart from thee. I am thine own virtuous love for Beatrice, to which all thy other affections are subordinated, and which justifies those other affections, since they have served for its protection and for leading thee to the understanding of its true nature. I am like the centre of a circle, because I am the centre of thy affections, and my virtue justifies them as the virtue of the centre extends to all the points of the circumference. But thou hast other affections beside thy central love, and so thou art like a circle which has a circumference as well as a centre. I am weeping with thee because I am thy love for Beatrice and she, deceived by calumnies, has misunderstood me: thou and I are both degraded in her eyes. We must do our best to persuade her of the truth.

NOTES

1, p. 77. — "Questa soverchievole voce che pareva che m'in-
amasse viziosamente." V.N. x, 2.

2, p. 77. — « Con ciò sia cosa che veracemente sia conosciuto
per lei alquanto lo tuo secreto per lunga consuetudine." V.N. xii, 7.

3, p. 77. — "Non degno salutare la tua persona, temendo non
fosse noiosa." V.N. xii, 6.

4, p. 77. — V.N. x, 2. "Beatitudine" is the state of being
beato, a state of ecstatic joy, such as belongs to angels and saints.
The *ballata*, "Poichè saziar non posso gli occhi miei," even though
it be not by Dante, illustrates the meaning well:

A guisa d'angel che, di sua natura,
Stando su in altura,
Divien beato sol guardando Iddio;
Così, essendo umana creatura,
Guardando la figura
Di questa Donna, che tiene il cor mio,
Potria beato divenir qui io...

Moore, ed. *Ballata ix*.

5, p. 77. — V.N. v, 4.

6, p. 78. — Cf. V.N. vi.

7, p. 78. — Cf. Andreas Capellanus, 162: "...a quo bonum in hac vita summum habet initium, et sine quo nullus in orbe posset laude dignus haberi."

8, p. 78. — The words "non dimandare più che utile ti sia" are an echo of *Ecclesiasticus* III, 21-23, a passage which is quoted in *Conv.* III, VIII: "Altiora te ne quaesieris, et fortiora te ne scrutatus fueris: sed quae praecepit tibi Deus, illa cogita semper et in pluribus operibus eius ne fueris curiosus. Non est enim tibi necessarium ea, quae abscondita sunt, videre oculis tuis." Melodia, ed. refers to *Romans* XII, 3: "Non plus sapere quam oportet sapere, sed sapere ad sobrietatem, etc.," and Beck (*ZRPh.* XLVII, 16) to *I Corinthians*, XII, 7: "Unicuique autem datur manifestatio Spiritus ad utilitatem."

9, p. 80. — There is nothing astonishing in this, for the stages of any individual's education are chiefly unconscious and only discernible clearly by the individual himself when he is able to survey a large part of his career.

10, p. 80. — We know that the lady celebrated in the thirtieth place was not Beatrice, but it is going too far to say that the thirtieth was the place of honour (cf. Zingarelli, 100), and that the poem was composed chiefly for the sake of that lady.

11, p. 82. — *V.N.* III (II).

12, p. 82. — *V.N.* III (II), 7: "e con essa mi pareva che se ne gisse verso lo cielo..."

13, p. 82. — *V.N.* II (I), 9.

14, p. 82. — *V.N.* III (II), 15.

15, p. 83. — *V.N.* IX, 11: "e recolo a servir novo piacere."

16, p. 83. — *V.N.* IX, 2.

17, p. 84. — "Questo angelo è questa nostra nobiltade che da Dio viene, comedito è, che ne la nostra ragione parla, ecc." *Conv.* IV, XXII, 16.

18, p. 84. — The sense would not be altered materially if we were to accept the reading "simulata" defended by Sicardi, *RCLIt.* XXV, 35.

19, p. 85. — Cf. Andreas Capellanus, 255: "Ipsius enim amoris naturali ac generali traditione docemur, neminem posse vere duplici amore ligari."

20, p. 86. — Cavalcanti, *Donna mi prega*, St. 4, lines 6-7.

21, p. 86. — Cf. Zonta, pp. 48-49.

22, p. 86. — *V.N.* XII, 17: "e però dico che questo dubbio io lo intendo solve e dichiarare in questo libello ancora in parte più dubbiosa..."

23, p. 86. — *V.N.* XXV, 1. Cf. Marigo, 99.

24, p. 87. — *V.N.* XIV, 1.

25, p. 88. — *V.N.* XXIV, 5.

26, p. 88. — *V.N.* XXIV, 8.

27, p. 89. — Love calls her "Quella nostra Beatrice," *V.N.* XII, 6.

28, p. 89. — *V.N.* XII, 7.

29, p. 89. — *V.N.* XII, 13.

30, p. 89. — Dante came to look upon his early loves for other women as stages in his progress toward comprehension of the worth

of Beatrice, as well as inferior manifestations of his best love, and this idea found a lasting place in the later development of his theory of love. Cf. the illustration of the pilgrim in quest of his inn, in *Conv.* IV, XII, 15.

31, p. 91. — V.N. XXIII, 21: "piansemi Amor nel core, ove dimora."

32, p. 92. — V.N. XII, 7: "Onde con ciò sia cosa che veracemente sia conosciuto per lei alquanto lo tuo secretò per lunga consuetudine..."

33, p. 92. — Beatrice is putting herself in the same class as the lady 'of the defence' Cf. V.N. XII, 6: "Quella nostra Beatrice udio... che la donna la quale io ti nominai... ricevea da te alcuna noia; e però... non degnò salutare la tua persona, temendo non fosse noiosa."

34, p. 93. — *Conv.* IV, XVI, 7-8.

35, p. 94. — Boethius, Lib. IV, Prosa VI, fo. 71-72. Busnelli, Part I, pp. 173-74, n. 1, gives the whole passage.

36, p. 94. — Boethius, Lib. III, Prosa XI, fo. 55, litt. E, and Lib. IV, Prosa VI, fo. 71, litt. D, G. Cf. Chistoni, 55-56, and Busnelli, Part I, p. 175, n. 1.

37, p. 94. — *Declaratio quorundam articulorum, contra Graecos, etc.* c. 10, cf. Boffito in *BSDIt.* X, 266 and Busnelli, Part I, p. 177. The original is inaccessible to me. On p. 176 Busnelli cites a shorter passage but equally clear, and to the same purpose, from the *Contra Gentes* I, 66. Aquinas XIII, 185.

38, p. 94. — Dionysius, Vol. I. *De divinis nominibus*, pp. 711-14.

39, p. 94. — *Ed. cit.* Vol. I, p. 714.

40, p. 95. — *ZRPh.* XLVII, 1-27.

41, p. 95. — Cf. Busnelli, Part I, pp. 180-81.

42, p. 96. — In an ordinary context the statement that love is an "accident" would be a mere truism, like saying that love is an affection or a passion. In this sense Cavalcanti too calls it an "accidente", but in V.N. XXV, and especially in the sentence "Amore non è per sè sì come sustanzia, ma è uno accidente in sustanzia," the author is declaring that the *Amore* he means can have no separate being, *per se*. This, of course, cannot be said of the Love that is God, nor can God's love be said to be an "accident".

43, p. 96. — Averroes, the most famous commentator of Aristotle in Dante's early years, uses it in the second book of the *De Anima* to explain the relation between the Common Sense and the external senses. The latter are like points on the circumference of a circle connecting by radii with the centre to which the Common Sense is compared. Cf. Averroes, Lib. II, § 149. Albertus Magnus uses it to illustrate the unity of the intellect in its relation to the "phantasmata" presented by the imagination. Cf. Albertus, Lib. III, Tr. III, cap. III, § 30.

44, p. 96. — For the text, cf. Pellegrini in NSM. I, Parte prima (1923), 131.

45, p. 97. — Aquinas, 2, Lib. II, Lectio XI, fo. 32, litt. H, I. Cf. Proto in *RCLII.* VII, 198-99, who gives longer extracts.

46, p. 97. — Aquinas, 2, Lib. II, Lectio VII, fo. 28, litt. A, B.

47, p. 98. — V.N. X, 2.

48, p. 98. — The various interpretations which have been offered to explain our passage may be classified, according to the view taken of the representative character of Love, as follows:

1. — Love is God.

This view, attributed to "Dr. Notter" in the edition of Witte, is advocated by Boffito in *Rendiconti del R. Istituto Lombardo*, S. 2, Vol. XXXVI, 1904 (which I have not seen), and in *BSDIt. X*, 266, where he gives the passage from Aquinas, *Decl. Quorund. Artic.*, cited above in this essay, p. 94. He believes that Love, i.e., God, is weeping over the approaching death of Beatrice, and that the whole episode is a prophecy of that death. Fletcher 2, 53-63 and in *Mod. Phil. XI*, 31-32, refers to *Par. xxviii*, 41-42 and 94-96, attributing to the author of the *Vita Nuova* the ideas of the *Paradiso*, and saying: "Moved by pride not charity, by passion not virtue, Dante is unlike God." Asín Palacios, 337-39, finding the circle and its centre used frequently in Abenarabi for "el cosmos y su principio divino," believes that Dante adopted the illustration "para poner de relieve el universal y necesario dominio que Dios, como objeto de amor ejerce sobre todas las criaturas, y en particular sobre él mismo..." Van Dijk, 127-29, who quotes Bonaventura, Plotinus, Aquinas and the *Pensées* of Pascal, reaches a similar conclusion.

In his learned article in *ZRPh. XLVII*, 1-27, Beck explains that Dante is comparing the perfect wisdom of God with the limited intelligence of man, especially of the poet himself. The comparison is a reproach to the latter, for he has impatiently sought to understand the truths of Faith by means of his reason. This is indicated by the words: "Non domandare più che utile ti sia." This is the offence of Dante, the "noia" which he is reported to have inflicted on the second lady of the defence, who, like the first, is an allegorical symbol of the same kind as the *donna gentile*. "Ich bin der *Signore de la nobiltade*, d.h. der Herr jeglicher Vollkommenheit (als centrum circuli). In mir konzentriert sich alles Wissen, weil jeder Punkt der Peripherie in meinem Banne steht, von mir gleichmässig umspannt und begriffen wird (*Iddio che solo colla infinita capacità l'Infinito comprende. Conv. IV*, 9, 19f.) Ich bin der Allwissende, meinem unendlichen, schrankenlosen Geist ist keine Grenze gesetzt; dagegen ist dein menschlicher Horizont beschränkt auf die deiner immer werdenden und vergehenden Natur entsprechende Erkenntniss. Ueber diese deine Fassungskraft hinaus sollst du nicht forschen wollen: es ist sträfliches und schädliches Beginnen." (18). An obvious objection is that nowhere in *V.N. XII* does Love reproach Dante for anything, on the contrary he commends him and encourages him to assert his innocence of the offence mistakenly ascribed to him. But, says Beck (17), "Hatte Dante nicht dem *Signore dela Nobiltade* passiven Widerstand geleistet, als dieser ihn unter Seufzern nahe legte, es sei nunmehr Zeit von der Scheinliebe (*simulacra*) abzulassen? (§ 12, 15-21). Hatte nicht dieser Amor-Gott vergeblich "irgendein Wort" (der Zustimmung) erwartet und darum bitterlich geweint? (§ 12, 19-20.)" He thinks that Love is weeping at Dante's reluctance to abandon the "simulacra", but there is no evidence what-

ever of any such reluctance, and Dante finds courage to speak when he realizes that he is expected to. Never before has Love shown any anxiety as to whether Dante will fall in with his suggestions or not. Is it possible that "Gott" was unable to guess what was in the mind of the hero? We are told that "Amor" and "Gott" are "Wechselbegriffe" (18) and that "unter Amor ist in Dante's Jugendwerk jedesmal Gott zu verstehen, wenn er als Person handelnd eingeführt wird" (20), but, apart from the fact that a god who is sometimes gay (*allegro*) and sometimes dejected cannot be thought of as the Christian God, and that in *Donne che avete* Love speaks of God in the third person (V.N. xix, 11), the last sentence quoted from our critic contradicts flatly what Dante says in V.N. xxv, 1, that is, that the Love he has been representing as a person ("als Person handelnd") is "uno accidente in sostanza." Also the plan proposed by "Gott" for undeceiving Beatrice, which is accompanied by the promise that it will succeed ("conoscerà le parole de li ingannati") and which is scrupulously followed by the hero, results only in his being derided by her at the house-warming party described in V.N. xiv.

2. — Love is right, i.e., virtuous, love.

According to Giuliani, ed., the substantial meaning of the words of Love is that Love is constant, whereas Dante is an inconstant lover; Witte's variation (*ed. cit.*) is that the singleness of right love is being compared to the promiscuousness of Dante's affections.

Scarano (2, 41-43) considers that the obscure words are a rebuke administered to Dante for having, by his excessive courtship, caused a scandal and inflicted "noia" upon the lady. But the "noia" is part of the "parole de li ingannati" which deceived Beatrice.

Proto's contribution (*RCLII*. VII, 193-200) is to introduce into the problem the Aristotelian definition of virtue as the mean between extremes. Virtuous love is like the centre of the circle because the centre is the middle point of the circle; the "Signore de la nobiltade" is like the centre, which, according to *Conv.* IV, xvi, is that which makes the circle noble. He cites passages from the commentary of St. Thomas to the *Ethics* of Aristotle, parts of which have already been given above, pp. 96-97, where the difficulty of virtuous conduct is compared to the difficulty of hitting the centre of a circle. Dante has been guilty of excess in executing the command of Love with regard to the lady "of the defence," and he is being reprov'd for his failure to be moderate. However, it is impossible to introduce Aristotle's "golden mean" without creating unsurmountable difficulties. If the centre stands for virtue, then the points on the circumference equidistant from it must be vices ("Io... sono quel punto medio in che consiste ogni virtù, equidistante da tutti gli estremi, che sono i vizi"), and yet the whole circle is noble, according to *Conv.* IV, xvi, because it has a centre. Also, as Parodi pointed out in *BSDII*. X, 265, Proto is obliged to assume that to be like the centre is the same thing as to be able to find the centre: Love is like the centre because he is able to find it, whereas Dante cannot. Proto allowed himself to be too much impressed by his discovery of the passages in St.

Thomas, just as Beck allowed himself to be carried away by his discovery of the extensive use of the centre and circle as a symbol for God.

Melodia, ed., approves of Proto's explanation. Cochin, tr. 200-203, and McKenzie, ed., offers similar solutions without going into details.

The chief objection to all the interpretations already mentioned, as well as to that of Lora (63-64), is that they suppose without foundation, and in spite of the evidence of the text, that Love is rebuking Dante for some error, but this objection cannot be made to that of Flamini (*ed. cit.*) or Marigo (54-55), who entertain the belief that it may be only the appearance of evil in Dante's conduct — the appearance of evil which has deceived Beatrice — that distresses Love. Flamini believes that "Amore parla oscuramente, per mostrare quanto immaturo a intendere il suo vero modo d'essere e d'operare sia il P. non illuminato ancora dai filosofici ammaestramenti dell'umana ragione..." and that "la spiegazione di questo tanto disputato 'amore *centrum circuli*', sarà da ricercare negli elementi e da fondare sui principi di quella filosofia aristotelica e tomistica, a cui Dante s'atterrà poi sempre." A mistaken view, I think, since Dante was not possessed of this philosophical lore when he composed the *Vita Nuova*. Marigo, in his examination of the *Vita Nuova*, shows how much of the learning displayed in the book is derived from the Bible, which the author evidently knew well, and from the teaching and tradition of the Franciscans — it is not necessary, I think, to suppose that he had studied the writings of St. Bonaventura. Marigo's interpretation is to be distinguished from all the others of this class in that the "dritto amore," which according to him is represented by Love, is good love not so much in an ethical as in a mystical sense: it is holy love, the "flamma di caritate" mentioned in *V.N.* xi. He is no doubt right, and my only criticism is that he, like Flamini, has neglected all the evidence which shows that this holy love is Dante's own love for Beatrice, not an abstract love, and that the "simulacra" are Dante's previous immature impressions of Love, as well as their manifestations in the courtship of the other ladies.

3. — Love is love in general.

The interpretations of this kind explain "Amore" as either the patron of all lovers, or the source of all individual loves, or universal love, i.e., the appetite for good in the universe. They are distinguished from those of the previous class in that the goodness of Love is not their chief consideration, although, in most of them, goodness is an essential characteristic.

Todeschini explained that "Amore" is like the centre of a circle because as patron of all lovers he is equally concerned for all of them, and they are like points on the circumference of the circle. Dante and Beatrice are among these latter, and Beatrice, who is in love with Dante, has been grieved because she has been led to believe that he is a fickle lover: that is why Love is weeping. D'Ancona, ed., perhaps because he was aware that there is no evidence in the *Vita Nuova* that Beatrice was ever in love with

Dante, modified Todeschini's interpretation a little by supposing that Love is weeping over the failure of the expedient of the "schermo": "porto il peso dei consigli dati per altrui vantaggio, e mal riusciti." Della Giovanna's view is similar, but he adds that the reason Dante is "non sic," not like Amore, is that whereas "tutti i fedeli miei (direbbe Amore) sono uguali davanti a me..., tu invece... puoi benissimo preferire Beatrice a tutte le altre donne, senza bisogno di finzioni..." He understands, like D'Ancona, that Love is repentant for having inspired the "simulacra" (*GSLIt.* VII, 258). Parodi, in *BSDIt.* XIV, 22-23, says that Love is universal love, and that, just as in *V.N.* ix he is dejected because of the loss suffered by the first lady "of the defence", so here he is weeping probably over the sorrow of the second lady. In *BSDIt.* XXVI, 9-10, he extends the motive for the tears of Love to the suffering of Beatrice and Dante as well as that of the second lady "dello schermo." The expedient of the "schermo" has been a failure, and Amore repents of having advised Dante to adopt it. Dante is not like Love, and there is no reason why he should be concerned with more than one beloved object. " 'Io sono il centro comune, o la comune ispirazione, la fiamma di innumerevoli amori; ma tu semplice individuo, non già'. O ancora: 'Una è la fiamma dell' Amore, ma indivisibile la favilla che ne tocca a ciascun individuo. Tu ti sei fatto il centro di due diversi amori, e questo non va. Io stesso, l'Amore stesso te l'ho consigliato sotto una parvenza di bene, per giovare all' Amore, per giovare ad un amore nobilissimo, proteggendone la purezza con lo schermo di uno meno nobile; ma era un' illusione: ne è nato soltanto dolore, per la donna dello schermo, per Beatrice, per te, e si è fatto torto all' idea stessa dell' Amore, ne è scemata la mia nobiltà. Tempus est ut praetermittantur simulacra nostra, che la fiamma dell'amore appaia nutrita dalla pura lealtà.' " Sicardi's explanation (*N.Ant.* CXL marzo-aprile 1909, 494-501, and *RCLIt.* XXVI, 1-36) seems to me essentially the same as that of Parodi. Filomusi Guelfi (*GD.* XXIII, 224-26) says that Love is like the centre because from the centre all the arcs of the circumference can be seen accurately. So Love the patron is able to understand the lovers correctly, and is therefore able to understand the motive of Beatrice in withdrawing her greeting.

One objection to all these interpretations (except that of Todeschini) is that while the text of *V.N.* xii forbids one to believe that Dante has fallen into any kind of error, it affords no ground for believing that Love regrets the expedient of the "schermo". The reason given for abandoning the "simulacra" is not that they have not served their purpose but that they have, and it is now *time* to abandon them, apparently because Love is to be for Dante something different from what it was before. But more important objections to these explanations (including Todeschini's) are as follows: — The conception of Love as the patron of all lovers was an old-fashioned, well-established one, it was the traditional conception inherited from the Provençals. If love is here the traditional patron of lovers, there is no reason why he should appear to Dante in a new and unrecognisable character; but he does,

and his doing so must be significant. As for his being universal love, a being which subsists apart from men and affects them irresistibly from time to time, that is the Cavalcantian conception, from which Dante has been drifting away in the direction of the Guinizellian idea that love is an individual passion existing separately in each noble heart and not otherwise, the idea which is embraced whole-heartedly in *V.N.* xx, and affirmed categorically in *V.N.* xxv, where it is said that *Amore* is not "una cosa per sè" but "uno accidente in sustanzia." The statement of chapter xxv is promised at the end of this very chapter xii, and the whole episode in this chapter appears to represent the introduction of a new conception of Love which is neither the Cavalcantian nor that of the common tradition.

The following interpretations also belong to this class, although each of them has its special feature: — Butti, in *GD.* VI, 128-30, says that universal love is always good in itself and may be directed to many objects, but Dante, who is an individual, cannot properly direct his affection to more than one object, and he is being rebuked for having done so. Similarly Pascoli (54-56), referring to *Purg.* xvii, 97, says that Love is always good in itself, but the form given to it by individuals may be bad. Love is like the centre of a circle, and the individual forms of it are like the points of the circumference. "...l'amore è in sè una cera, che qualunque impronta riceva, è rispetto a quelle impronte... equidistante, come a dire, indifferente... noi vediamo come l'Amore stesso possa rimproverare o compiangere l'amante, di ciò che proprio esso gli consigliò o gli approvò." Beatrice too, he says, rebukes Dante in *Purg.* xxx, although, like *Amore* in *V.N.* xii, she recognizes that "e' non mutò'l core." But it is not easy to see why, if Love is really "indifferente", he should either weep or rebuke Dante at all, and it does not seem true that Beatrice, in *Purg.* xxx, recognizes that Dante has been at all constant. Gargano Cosenza (2,103-04), who cites *Purg.* xviii, 36-40, acknowledges that his interpretation is essentially the same as that of Pascoli. Guerri (*Rass.* xxviii, 1920, 54-55), who, like Pascoli, understands that Love is indifferent to the joys and sorrows of lovers, explains that the tears of Love are a transparent fiction, merely reflecting the grief of Dante himself, and employed by the author to convey the idea that, Love himself being indifferent like the centre of a circle, Dante can find pity nowhere and is utterly disconsolate. Beside being highly fanciful, this explanation is contradicted by the extraordinarily earnest and sympathetic words and conduct of Love throughout the chapter.

Grandgent's interpretation (3, pp. 63-94) is: "Love, the motive power of earth and heaven, is in itself a type of perfect equilibrium, even as the centre of a circle, equally distant from all points in its circumference; but mortals moved by love seldom preserve this even poise, being by temperament imperfect, that is, unbalanced" (63). Dante's love was unbalanced because it was as yet selfish, and so not proof against infidelity, hence the ladies of the "schermo" and the others. It is not until the ladies of chapter xviii have pointed out his error that he begins to appreciate

it. This explanation is offered at the beginning of an essay in which the writer is admirably illustrating Dante's sense of the importance of "equipoise" in the universe and in the individual, who needs to find the true balance of desire and will. The obscure words of Love are only one illustration of the doctrine which is appealed to again in the last words of the *Paradiso*. Like Pascoli and many others Mr. Grandgent brings to bear on our passage a light derived from the *Convivio* and the *Commedia* which may be misleading, and ignores the fact that Dante's theory of love is in its infancy in the *Vita Nuova*, and different from what it becomes in the later works. One might argue just as plausibly from the *Convivio* that "Amore" in V.N. xii is the love of knowledge, instead of from the *Commedia* that he is the love that moves the sun and the other stars. As for "infidelity", that is strenuously denied by Love himself in our chapter, and a love that is content with a kindly greeting is not "selfish" in a blameable sense. It is not that Love is reproving Dante, but that Dante's love is appearing to him in a new way.

Salvadori (145-49) admits the importance of the passages from Aristotle and St. Thomas indicated as sources for our passage by Boffito and Proto. He modifies the interpretations of the latter without, however, removing the features to which I have objected. I mention him late in this class because his is a synthesis of previous interpretations with his own contribution, which is the idea that Dante was influenced by a neoplatonic use of the circle and the centre to signify beauty and goodness respectively. In this way the illustration has a quadruple significance: "...i Platonici mirano all' ordine estetico; Aristotile mira all' ordine morale; Tommaso mira all' eterno. I contrapposti sono sempre l'uno e i più, l'invisibile e il visibile, la rettitudine e il traviamiento, l'Eterno e il tempo. Abbiamo appunto i quattro sensi dell' Egesi medioevale seguita da Dante: il senso letterale, l'allegorico, il morale, l'anagogico. Io sono l'amore del Sommo Bene, a cui tutti i beni minori sono, rispetto al Sommo indifferenti. Io sono la virtù che sta nel mezzo; ma tu puoi trascorrere, o sei trascorso, nella colpa e nel vizio. Io sono l'Amore eterno a cui tutti i tempi sono egualmente presenti; ma a te non è dato conoscerli tutti" (148). It may be objected that the evidence of direct neoplatonic influence is insufficient, for it is not enough to refer to Cian's edition of the *Cortegiano* or to Marsilio Ficino (147). Salvadori's interpretation is admirably constructed, but it is an anachronism to explain a passage of the *Vita Nuova* as implying a highly developed theory of love, based on profound philosophical study such as is unfolded in the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* (cf. pp. 148 and 149), to say nothing of the theory of the four senses of "le scritture" expounded in *Conv.* II, 1.

4. — Love is Fortune in love.

This is the interpretation of De Labusquette (624-26), who reminds us that Monte Andrea speaks of the "wheel of love," and Cino, Cavalcanti and Lapo, of Love turning the wheel of fortune. But Love who is Fortune would not weep over Dante's misfortunes, or inform him as to the motives of Beatrice, or offer to witness to his loyalty. Nor does the thoughtful youth in white clothing

suggest Fortune. The "simulacra" would be inexplicable, and the whole episode would represent no progress in Dante's understanding of love.

5. — Love is Dante's own love for Beatrice.

Renier in *GSLII*. II, 391-92: — Love is like the centre because he is the love for the proper object of Dante's affections, that is the perfection of womanhood, the love to which Dante will soon attain. The circle is the circle of amorous affections. Dante is not like the centre because, manlike, he has not been able to fix his affections upon the ideal object. Except for the logical looseness of saying that Dante is not like the centre because he cannot find the centre, the interpretation would be unobjectionable, were it not for Renier's insisting that Beatrice is no real person but an ideal, and asserting that the love for the second lady "of the defence" was a disgraceful passion.

The only points made by Maruffi, in *GD*. III, 125-28, are that Love is Dante's love for Beatrice, and that this love is his true guide because it sees everything clearly, just as the centre of a circle is the just point of vantage in viewing the points of the circumference. The explanation is very limited.

Federzoni 1, 106-11: — Dante's love for Beatrice is like the centre because it is his only noble love. Dante's other loves are not noble, and he is unlike the centre because he has directed his love to another point. "L'uomo, quando cede ai suoi istinti (siccome certamente aveva fatto il giovine Dante con quella che fu secondo *schermo della veritate*) è fuori di quel punto giusto; e ...bisogna che ci si rimetta subitamente..." But to be unlike the centre is not the same thing as to be removed from it.

Petrobono, Vol. I, p. 56: "Io sono immobile come centro di cerchio, che non si avvicina più a questa che a quella parte della circonferenza; tu no. Tu ti muti, seguendo gl'impulsi del tuo cuore, e da colei, che dovrebbe essere l'oggetto unico del tuo amore, corri dietro, quando a una e quando a un' altra. Gli fa un ammonimento e un rimprovero..." Petrobono explains that Amore represents the poet's "volontà", whereas he himself represents his "appetito", and this idea could be made plausible by referring to *V.N.* XII, 7: "e per questo sentirà ella la tua voluntade..." or to *V.N.* XXXVIII, where occurs the debate between "ragione" and "appetito". Instead the interpreter refers to *Par.* XXXIII, 143-45, making no distinction between this young love of Dante for Beatrice, and universal love, as is natural for one who believes the *Vita Nuova* to have been written when the author was middle-aged.

Federn, tr., 138:—"Ich deine grosse Liebe stehe fest im Mittelpunkt, du aber hast dich von diesem Liebe Mittelpunkt fortbewegt, indem du andere zu lieben vorgabst und diesen Neigungen spieltest, dadurch sind die richtigen Verhältnisse gestört, und dein Liebeskreis ist in Verwirrung geraten."

All these interpretations are open to the familiar objections that they suppose the words of Love to be a rebuke to Dante, and overlook the significant novelty of this third apparition.

49, p. 98. — Cicero, 194-95.

IV

E CHE DIRÀ NE LO INFERNO

I think the *Vita Nuova* would never have been written but for the occasion mentioned in the tenth chapter, when Beatrice prudently refrained from greeting Dante. For, if we consider that none of the poems in the first nine chapters, except the first sonnet, were written for her, it seems evident that before that event his love for her — exquisitely shy and reverent — had subsisted on the memory of the occasions when her presence and gracious words filled him with the bewildering exaltation described in the eleventh chapter. It had never become the human passion that now mastered him and became the very mode of his life.

His first impression of the misfortune was that of an unexpected and perhaps irretrievable loss. He had lost that which from time to time raised him above the ordinary run of men, and made even his ordinary life of action and pleasure different from that of others. His love-affairs had themselves been finer than those of others because of the influence of the “*donna della [sua] mente*,” the lady who appealed to the divine part in him. Hitherto he had always been able to attune body and soul by resorting to her presence: her gracious acceptance of his devotion rehabilitated him in his own eyes, for the fact that he felt so overwhelmingly the virtue that issued from her, assured him of his own worth¹: he had now lost the preciousness of life and a good part of his own self-respect.

He takes counsel with Love, that is, with his own heart. His other loves, which were amusing enough in their time, now seem ridiculously worthless, as his anxiety concentrates all his attention upon the treasure that has slipped from his grasp: they were mere imitations of love, "simulacra". They and his other desires and inclinations are all equally inferior to this which is the centre of them all, his one perfectly good love. Clearly the loss is not to be borne; he must at all costs regain his lady's favour; he will not remain contemptible in her eyes.

His first effort to regain the favour of Beatrice is the 'ballata' of the twelfth chapter, graceful, skilful, full of feeling and of delicate reticence; a poem in which, too, appears the confidence of the writer that he can persuade the lady. He does not believe that she can resist a love so humble but so genuine, and he is conscious that he has expressed it well, that his art has not failed him; he has good hope that she will smile to him her forgiveness, the reply that he does not hesitate to suggest in the last stanza.

But the reply comes not, and meanwhile there is for the first time growing within him a new passion of love. Instead of a calm sentiment of devotion, stimulated at times by the hypnotic influence of the lady's greeting, he is now possessed by a craving, the "oscura qualità" of which torment him ceaselessly; he cannot resist it or bargain with it. This is the passion of love as described by his friend Guido Cavalcanti, and it seems to him rather an evil and a great affliction than the natural expression of the good in man, as the other Guido called it.

Nevertheless his sufferings, he thinks, ought to earn for him the pity of the lady: Cavalcanti had said that "solo da costui nasce mercede," and indeed it seems as though Dante's only hope is in the mercifulness of Beatrice, and not in his own ability to prove his innocence; he reflects sadly that she is not like other women who are appeased as easily as they are offended. Alas, when more than once he

is driven by his unhappiness to seek her out, he is put to shame in her presence by the conflict of emotions within him, and is obliged to retreat without attempting to speak to her, and once she even makes sport of his helplessness, with her friends: she would not do that if he could speak to her, if she could know why it is that he looks so strangely silent and pale.

As his anxiety increased and the smouldering fire burned, appetite failed and sleep abandoned him. No doubt his health suffered, for all his thought was an inconclusive pondering about a single tormenting question. Like every unrequited lover he found a melancholy satisfaction in foreshadowing his own death; and with the imagination of death came solemn thoughts of the world beyond, such as were never far removed from the mind of a piously nurtured man of the thirteenth century. These thoughts began to induce in him a soothing melancholy which calmed the tumult of his emotions. Calm and melancholy is the spirit that pervades the greater part of the 'canzone' *Lo doloroso amor che mi conduce*, which was no doubt written at this time,² although the 'commiato', with a revulsion of feeling very natural to one who is not yet resigned to his loss, appeals desperately once more to his estranged love:

Morte, che fai piacere a questa donna,
per pietà innanzi che tu mi discigli,
va da lei, fatti dire
perchè m'avvien che la luce di quigli
che mi fan tristo, mi sia così tolta:
se per altrui ella fosse ricolta,
falmi sentire, e trarra' mi d'errore,
e assai finirò con men dolore.

One consoling thought that had occurred to him was the familiar reflection, dear to all despairing lovers, that if he were to die he would be dying for her sake: there is evident satisfaction in the gentle irony of the line:

Per quella moro c'ha nome Beatrice.

Another was that though she might never be reconciled to him, nothing could rob him of the memory of what she had been to him. He would carry that memory with him to the grave, and beyond the grave. Of course he was unworthy of her, and he could not tell whether, after death, he might not be condemned to everlasting punishment, but what were the joys of paradise compared with the sight of her sweet face?

la gio' del dolce viso,
a che niente par lo paradiso.

And if his soul could still dwell in the memory of her, even the torments of hell could not affect him.

Pensando a quel che d'Amore ho provato,
l'anima mia non chiede altro diletto,
nè il penar non cura il quale attende;
chè, poi che 'l corpo sarà consumato,
se n'anderà l'amor che m'ha sì stretto
con lei a quel ch'ogni ragione intende;
e se del suo peccar pace no i rende,
partirassi col tormentar ch'è degna,
sì che non ne paventa;
e starà tanto attenta
d'imaginar colei per cui s'è mossa,
che nulla pena avrà ched ella senta;
sì che se'n questo mondo io l'ho perduto,
Amor ne l'altro men darà trebuto.

By this time, then, Dante has reached the conclusion that love is a good thing, as Guinizelli had declared, no matter what suffering it may involve, and even if it is not returned. Even if he has lost the reward of his love in this world, the favour of his lady, he cannot be deprived of his reward in the next, the joy of dwelling in the *memory* of his love. Like Guinizelli he is in doubt as to what will be the judgment of God: the fact that he is a "cor gentil" and capable of good love is no guarantee that he will be judged worthy of paradise, and perhaps the withdrawal of the "saluto" of Beatrice is a sign of his unworthiness.

But nevertheless, just as nothing can hinder him from loving her, so nothing can rob him of the joy of that love: it will defy the pains of hell itself.

This is a bold saying for Dante to utter. No doubt he had in mind the sayings of previous poets — who, however, were not as serious as he is — in which the joys of paradise are spoken of somewhat slightly,³ but to defy the torments of hell was not a convention, and I do not think Dante would have been so bold if he had not been almost ready to take the next step in the process of thought which the story of the *Vita Nuova* illustrates. The next step is the conclusion that love is not only evidence of goodness in the lover, it is essentially the same as goodness — “Amore e’l cor gentil sono una cosa.” His love for Beatrice is the best in him: she is his saint, the mediator to him of the grace of God. If he were to lose her he would indeed be lost, but surely the mercy of God will not fail him! Sinner though he is, his love will save him, and his saint will smile on him again. He will wait patiently and will not again be importunate to her: he will be content with the beatitude which he can now find in worshipping her — “in quelle parole che lodano la donna mia.”

It is in this frame of mind, I think, that he wrote the canzone *Donne che avete*. The poem is not altogether original, for the scene in the court of heaven, with the prayer of the angel and the decision on the side of mercy, are echoes of a popular religious tradition, as Salvadori has shown, to be found in St. Bernard, Bonaventura, and Jacopone da Todi,⁴ and in other important respects the canzone seems to be reminiscent of *Per la grande abbondanza* of Chiaro Davanzati,⁵ but it is the first poem of the *Vita Nuova* in which the poet's attitude toward his lady is definitely religious. She is his saint, and on her he depends for his salvation. It is no longer the mere loss of her “saluto”, her greeting, that he is mourning; it is the loss of the “salute” that comes through her, that he fears. But there

is in this poem a confidence that he will not lose it such as is absent from the canzone *Lo doloroso amor*. If he loses her he will be lost, but the divine mercy is allowing her to remain on earth, although the whole court of heaven is clamouring for her presence, in order that Dante, her humble devoted worshipper, may be saved. And he still hopes, as the last stanza shows, that she will be moved by this song of praise and indirect prayer to be kind to him once more, not by returning a human love, but by accepting his worship, and preserving him from sin and damnation.⁶ Even in the worst event, that beatitude cannot fail him which is in the words that praise his lady.⁷

Sola Pietà nostra parte difende,
che parla Dio, che di madonna intende:
"Diletti miei, or sofferite in pace
che vostra spene sia quanto me piace
là 'v' è alcun che perder lei s'attende,
e che dirà ne lo inferno: O mal nati,
io vidi la speranza dei beati."

Chapters x-xviii have been concerned exclusively with Dante's thoughts and feelings about his own relation to Beatrice, arising from the crisis brought about by the withdrawal of her salutation. One cannot, I think, bear in mind the internal conflict which the poet represents to us so intensely, the calm conclusion to which he comes, and the stanza "Pensando a quel che d'Amore ho provato" which I have quoted from the canzone *Lo doloroso amor*, with its defiance of the pains of hell — one cannot bear all this in mind and still believe that *alcun* in "là 'v' è alcun che perder lei s'attende" means "più d'uno" as Mazzoni believes, even if that "più d'uno" be understood to include Dante incidentally. It is only by ignoring the poet's desperate self-questioning and the solemnity of the shadow of death that he imagined to be overhanging him, that one can harbour such a belief. Who is it that is in fear of losing

Beatrice, "che perder lei s'attende"?⁸ Not the "cor villani" of verse 33, who take no pleasure in her; and not the others who appreciate the blessing of her presence but who have no special reason to fear losing her; but he whose particular saviour she is, and who has every reason for fearing to lose her because she has already withdrawn her favour from him.

I do not think any one would ever have doubted that "alcun" means Dante, had it not seemed as if God himself were announcing the inevitable perdition of "alcun":

là 'v' è alcun che perder lei s'attende,
e che dirà ne lo inferno: O mal nati,
io vidi la speranza de' beati.

Needless to say, words that are put into the mouth of God are intended to be taken seriously, but I do not think He is making any such announcement. It seems to me that the meaning of the second and third of these three verses depends upon that of the first: Dante's fear of losing Beatrice is mentioned in the first, and the others say what he will do if that fear is realized. Dante's being in hell and saying "O mal nati, ecc." depends on his losing Beatrice: if he loses her he will be damned, but not otherwise. In other words I think the meaning is: *there where is one who is in fear of losing her, and who [if he does lose her] will be able to say [even] in hell: 'Oh ye ill-starred souls! I have known her whom the saints in heaven hope for.'* In modern Italian: *là dove vi è uno che teme di perderla, e che [in tal caso, cioè se la perderà] è capace di dire [anche] nell' inferno: 'O anime sciagurate, [io non sono come voi, perchè] io ho conosciuto [su in terra] quella il cui arrivo in cielo è sollecitato dai beati, [e però non sento le pene infernali che patite voi.]*

Lest it should be thought that I am attempting to force into the second sentence a meaning it could not have naturally, let me point out a similar construction in the canzone

Lo doloroso amor, which is so closely related to this one : a construction, that is, in which a sentence that presents an hypothesis is followed by another which tacitly takes the hypothesis for granted :

e se del suo peccar pace no i rende,
 partirassi col tormentar ch' è degna,
 sì che non ne paventa;
 e [se ciò avverrà] starà tanto attenta
 d'imaginar colei per cui s'è mossa,
 che nulla pena avrà ched ella senta.⁹

It is understood, in our passage, that the loss of Beatrice will mean the damnation of Dante. But is the poet convinced that he will lose her? Not at all. The fact that the speech of God is prompted by mercy (Pietà) is a fatal stumbling-block in the way of those interpretations which suppose that "alcun" (whether it mean Dante or others) is being condemned to hell, for, if so, the mercy of God is indeed niggardly and futile. On the contrary, God in his mercy is decreeing that Beatrice shall remain for an indefinite time on earth, for the sake of one who is so completely devoted to her that if he loses her, and so loses his soul, he will nevertheless — as he has already declared in *Lo doloroso amor* — comfort himself and boast of his immunity from suffering to the less fortunate denizens. (God is speaking from his knowledge of the mind of Dante, not, of course, referring directly to *Lo doloroso amor*.) A servant as devout as this deserves that the opportunity of salvation be not withdrawn from him: he is one of the violent kind who take the kingdom of heaven by force: he will not be lost.¹⁰

I have interpreted "ne lo inferno" as meaning *anche nell' inferno*, because some such word as *anche* or *pure* seems to me to indicate suitably the proper emphasis. Dante's devotion to Beatrice is so complete that *even in hell* he will still rejoice in her praise. The poet's verse, in

its terseness, often omits words such as this, which would serve only to indicate the emphasis that is understood, for example:

O donna in cui la mia speranza vige,
e che soffristi per la mia salute
[pur] in inferno lasciar le tue vestige.¹¹

Godi, Fiorenza, poi che se' sì grande
che per mare e per terra batti l'ali,
e [anche] per lo 'nferno tuo nome si spande!¹²

As for the exclamation "O malnati", it has always seemed strange to me, as it did to Scarano,¹³ to suppose that one *malnato* should address the others in this way. The speaker belongs to a different category from theirs. Although like them condemned to hell, he is not ill-starred, not a *malnato*, because he has had the good fortune to know Beatrice,¹⁴ that good fortune which, as the poet says in *Lo doloroso amor*, is sufficient to offset the misfortune of being in hell.

The fact that the words of our passage are uttered by God has led some to suppose that Dante is here condemning himself to hell, a supposition which is contradicted by the whole narrative of the *Vita Nuova*. Others, as has been said, have been driven by this fact to reject the most natural understanding that "alcun" means Dante. If, however, the damnation of "alcun" is, as I think, contingent on his losing Beatrice, there is no reason for abandoning the more obvious interpretation of that word, for Beatrice is to remain on earth so that "alcun", that is Dante, may not lose her.

That the words "e che dirà ne lo inferno, ecc." are dependent in the way I have explained on the immediately preceding words "che perder lei s'attende,"¹⁵ is confirmed by the similar passage in *Lo doloroso amor*. In the latter poem it is said that if Dante cannot obtain peace with his maker at the judgment seat, he will nevertheless have no

fear of the pains of hell, because he will be contemplating Beatrice in his imagination; in *Donne che avete* God is saying that *if* Dante loses Beatrice he will still rejoice, even in hell, over the good fortune of having known her, and in the indestructible happiness of praising her. The hypothesis is the same in both canzoni, and the conclusion that depends, in each case, on that hypothesis — the conclusion that Dante will be happy even in hell — is the same in each. Poetically speaking, the words of God are an echo of the statement in *Lo doloroso amor*.¹⁶

Those who hold that "alcun" is not Dante have been obliged to represent Beatrice as the saviour of the whole world; "nostra parte" in "sola Pietà nostra parte difende," has been explained as referring to the whole of humanity in spite of the confidential tone of the introductory stanza, in which the poet says he will speak "donne e donzelle amorse, con vui, — chè non è cosa da parlare altrui." Why should the author be so unwilling to speak of this matter with the many others who (if "nostra parte" means the interests of all mankind) are intensely concerned, and in fear of losing their Beatrice?¹⁷

The same view leads inevitably to an ingenious discussion as to who are the "alcun" who will be damned. Are they the "cor villani" of verse 33, and in that case why should they fear or expect to lose Beatrice, and is it reasonable that the mercy of God should be extended to them, even in a slight measure? Are they the "gentle hearts" of verse 37, who appreciate the heavenly quality of the lady, but who may fail to take advantage of her presence among them? Are they some from each of these two classes?¹⁸ And since the person of Dante cannot be entirely disregarded, there is the question: in which of these classes does he intend to include himself?¹⁹

Although I regard all such discussion as unnecessary, I must, of course, admit that "alcun" may literally mean either a single person or more than one, but I do not see

how it can be used to designate a large number of persons, and yet there must have been many contemporaries of Beatrice on earth, and even in Florence, who were destined to be damned. To me it seems certain that the poet chose this word, both here and in verse 37, "*e quando trova alcun che degno sia*," to avoid the accusation of self-praise. It will be remembered that one of the reasons he gives in chapter xxviii (xxix) for omitting an account of the death of Beatrice is: "Non è convenevole a me trattare di ciò, per quello che, trattando, converrebbe essere me laudatore di me medesimo, la quale cosa è al postutto biasimevole a chi lo fae." It would no doubt have seemed a colossal exhibition of egotism for him to represent himself openly as the single object of the attention of God, as the one person for whose sake the whole court of heaven is deprived of the longed-for presence of Beatrice. He avoids obvious self-praise by saying "*alcun che perder lei s'attende*," "*alcun che degno sia — di veder lei*," and he conceals his hope of being reconciled to Beatrice in the words: "non pò mal finir *chi l'ha parlato*."

At the end of his analysis of the poem, the author says that to explain the canzone fully more minute divisions than those he has made would be required, but that he does not care to enlighten those persons who cannot understand it without them, "*chè certo io temo d'avere'a troppi comunicato lo suo intendimento pur per queste divisioni che fatte sono...*" He has made four divisions of the first stanza and four of the fourth, but he has left undivided the second and third and the last. Now the second and third are the stanzas in which are expressed his fear of losing Beatrice, the merciful provision for his salvation, the sense of his own worthiness, and his hope of reconciliation, and the last contains the indirect appeal to his lady. It is not therefore unreasonable to suppose that these are the matters which he does not care to explain too clearly to those who cannot understand without such an explana-

tion. These things are the real subject of the poem. The ostensible subject is the praise of Beatrice, but the real subject is Dante's estrangement from Beatrice, his dependance on her for salvation, and the hope he has of being reconciled to her.

non perch'io creda sua laude finire,
ma ragionar per isfogar la mente.³⁰

NOTES

1, p. 109. — "E quando trova alcun che degno sia — di veder lei, quei prova sua vertute." V.N. xix, 10.

2, p. 111. — The first stanza complains of the poet's being deprived of the light of the eyes of "Beatrice", who is mentioned by name, and the subject of the whole poem is his grief over that loss.

3, p. 113. — Cf. the comment of Nannucci, *Manuale*, I, 123, on the sonnet of Jacopo da Lentino: "Io m'aggio posto in core a Dio servire — Com' io potesse gire in Paradiso, ecc." and the sonnet of Neri Poponi in LVRV 89-90: "Sì forte mio dio siete — che d'altro paradiso — giammai non metto cura." Similar expressions, as Nannucci says, are not uncommon in the verse of the troubadours. Cf. also Chiaro Davanzati in LVRV. 222, and Monte Andrea, *ibid.*, 466.

4, p. 113. — Salvadori, 175-90, and in *N. Ant.* 16 gennaio, 1904.

5, p. 113. — LVRV. 234-35. Cf. BSDII. XX, 298.

6, p. 114. — The author of the canzone *Ben aggia l'amoroso e dolce core*, which is a reply *per le rime* to *Donne che avete*, appreciates the unusually lofty and religious tone of Dante's poem, but he also understands that it is an indirect appeal to Beatrice, and a hopeful appeal:

Ahi Deo, com' have avanzato 'l su' detto
partendolo da noi in alta sede!
e com' have 'n sua laude dolce fede,
che ben ha cominzato e meglio prende (15)

.....
sì che di noi nessuna donna tace,
ma prega Amor che quella a cui s'arrende
sia a lui umiliata in tutti lati
dov' udirà li suoi sospir gittati. (25)

.....
poi ched egli è infra gl' innamorati
quel che 'n perfetto amar passa, e più gio'v' ha
noi donne il metteremmo in paradiso,
udendol dir di lei c' ha lui conquiso. (55)

7, p. 114. — Compare the three passages: — V.N. xviii, 4: “lo fine del mio amore fue già lo saluto di questa donna, ...Ma poi che le piacque di negarlo a me, lo mio signore Amore, la sua merzede, ha posto tutta la mia beatitudine in quello che non mi puote venire meno.” *Lo doloroso amor*, 38-42: “e starà tanto attenta — d’imagnar colei per cui s’è mossa, — che nulla pena avrà ched ella senta; — sì che se ’n questo mondo iol’ho perduto, — Amor ne l’altro men darà trebuto.” *Donne che avete*, 27-28: “e che dirà ne lo inferno : O mal nati, — io vidi la speranza de’ beati.”

8, p. 115. — “Che perder lei s’attende” means ‘anticipates the possibility of losing her’, that is, ‘is aware that he is in danger of losing her’. So “attende” in *Lo doloroso amor*, 31: “nè il penar non cura il quale attende,” as is plain in the light of verse 35: “e se del suo peccar pace no i rende.”

9, p. 116. — *Lo doloroso amor*, 35-40. Another example is *Inf.* i, 121-23:

A le qua’ poi se tu vorrai salire,
anima fia a ciò di me più degna:
con lei [in tal caso] ti lascerò nel mio partire.

10, p. 116. — *Matthew* xi, 12.

11, p. 117. — *Par.* xxxi, 79-81.

12, p. 117. — *Inf.* xxvi, 1-3. Cf. also *Inf.* i, 5-6: “esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte — che [pur] nel pensier rinnova la paura!” and *Amor che ne la mente*, 66-67: “e rompon come trono — l’innati vizii che fanno altrui vile,” that is, as the commentary (*Conv.* III, viii, 17-20) explains, not only the “vizii consuetudinarii” but even the “vizii innati.”

13, p. 117. — In *ZRPh.* xxxvi, 347. Scarano, however, supposes that the speaker is a “bennato” only in the sense that he was better disposed during his life-time than those he is addressing were in theirs.

14, p. 117. — “Io vidi” evidently means here, as it does in so many passages of Dante, and indeed in the common usage, something more than a mere physiological sensation. It implies knowledge, acquaintance, experience of the kind meant in verses 10 and 11, “E quando trova alcun che degno sia — di veder lei, quei prova sua vertute.” A similar use of “vedere” is in V.N. xxiii, 8. “Io sono a vedere lo principio de la pace.” V.N. iii (ii), 9, “e con ciò fosse cosa che io avesse già veduto per me medesimo l’arte del dire parole per rima,” seems to mean that the author had already had experience in rhyming words. V.N. xxi, 3, “ond’è laudato chi prima la vide” probably means: “so that he who was already acquainted with her is highly esteemed”; *conobbe* instead of “vide” would have implied too intimate an acquaintance. See Boccaccio 3, Vol. I, 9: “...e accioché niuna parte di filosofia non veduta da lui rimanesse, nelle profondità altissime della teologia con acuto ingegno si mise.”

15, p. 117. — The author of the curious version in the Marcian MS. ix, 191 understood the dependence I mean:

È nel mondo uno che perdendo lei [that is *nel caso che la perdesse*] intende
D'andare nello inferno agli malnati...

Cf. Beck, ed. 46 and *RBLIt.* VII, 247. Zappia, 242, n. 1.

16, p. 118. — Mazzoni, in *Misc.RT.* 133-34, comparing the two passages, remarks that in *Lo doloroso amor* there is a double hypothesis, for, preceding the "dannata ipotesi," "e se del suo peccar pace no i rende," "c'è anche, nella stanza precedente, l'ipotesi, per così dire, beata:

e sempre che a lei sarò ricolto,
ricordando la gioia del bel viso."

But the critical edition reads:

e sempre mai con lei starà ricolto,

and the subject of "starà" is "dolor" of verse 24, while "lei" refers to "l'anima" of verse 25. In other words there is no "ipotesi beata."

17, p. 118. — Cf. Melodia, ed. n. 24: "...la parte nostra, la causa nostra, cioè di me e di voi, donne gentili." The author of *Ben aggia l'amoroso e dolce core* also takes the view that no one is concerned except Dante, Beatrice, and the ladies whom the poet has addressed.

18, p. 118. — Mazzoni thinks they are some of each kind; Gorra thinks they are some of the "villani", the particular lot who have made trouble between Dante and Beatrice. Cf. *infra*, n. 20, interpretations E. 1 and E. 2.

19, p. 118. — Proto holds that Dante does not know to which class he belongs. Cf. *infra*, n. 20, interpretation E. 3.

20, p. 120. — Melodia (ed. cit. pp. 140-46) reviews the discussion of *Donne che avete* 26-28, before the year 1905. I give here a list of the chief interpretations, appending to each one a few words of criticism.

A.1. — *Alcun* means Dante. *Che perder lei s'attende*: who expects or fears to lose Beatrice, because a person of her celestial quality cannot be long for this world. *E che dirà ne lo inferno, ecc.*: who already has in mind a literary work of some kind describing an imaginary journey to the lower regions.

Balbo, 40-41. Giuliani, ed. Fraticelli, ed. I, 93. Witte, ed. Renier in *GSLIt.* II, 386-87. Gaspary 2, Vol. I, pp. 298-99. Scartazzini, 417-18. Colagrosso, 55-67 and in *GSLIt.* XXX, 452-53. Rajna, in *VIT.* 157-58. Ciuffo, 6-23. Federzoni, 1, 125-53. Pascoli 2, 24-30. Gargano Cosenza, 108-14. Grasso, 82-108. Melodia, ed. Zappia, 222-45 (with reservations). Cochin, tr. Flamini, ed. and in *FD.* 28 marzo, 1909. Scherillo, ed. Cesareo, ed. Pietrobono Vol. I, 65-69. Lora, 71ss. Ciarardini in *RCLIt.* XXVI, 100-105. McKenzie, ed. (without definite pronouncement). I have not seen Faiani, A., *L'Opera di Dante* in R. Liceo Maurolico, *Nel VI centenario della D.C. Messina*, tip. D'Amico, 1900. Cf. *BSDIt.* VIII, 179.

Needless to say, if Dante had never written the *Inferno* no one would ever have seen in these lines the suggestion of an intention to write such a work. Those who favour this interpretation seem

to have been unduly influenced by the importance of the Divine Comedy. They have failed to consider sufficiently that the canzone *Donne che avete* was written even before the *Vita Nuova* was begun or planned. The last words of the *Vita Nuova*, in chapter XLII (XLIII), announce the author's intention to write a work in which Beatrice shall be worthily praised, but these words, far from confirming a supposition that Dante might for some time have been cherishing such a purpose, seem to indicate clearly that the idea had not occurred to him before; and far from forecasting an *Inferno* they seem to suggest the description of a vision of Beatrice in glory, like the "mirabile visione" mentioned in the previous words of the same sentence, a vision which is appropriate after her death and apotheosis, but which would be inappropriate before her death, and especially at a time when Dante, who had lost her favour, was hoping to regain it, as is evidenced by the last stanza of *Donne che avete*.

The incongruity, too, of placing in the mouth of God the announcement of a work to be written by Dante seems astonishing even to us, who are already impressed by the greatness of the *Commedia*; but if we also suppose (as do the supporters of this interpretation) that it is not the *Commedia* or the *Inferno*, as we know them, that is being announced, but only some much smaller and much more vaguely planned account of a descent into Hell,—such as Dante might have imagined at this early date, — then that incongruity assumes the proportions of a magnificent improbability.

The canzone *Lo doloroso amor*, written about the same time as *Donne che avete*, contains a similar statement to that in our passage, but without using the word *Inferno*, and without suggesting any future writing by Dante.

A. 2. — The lines referring to the *Inferno* were written or rewritten later than the canzone.

Wegele, 112 and 389. Todeschini, Vol. I, pp. 275 ss. Scartazzini, 321. Scherillo 1, 342-47.

All the mss. of the canzone *Donne che avete* — whether presenting it as part of the *Vita Nuova* or by itself — contain the supposed reference to the *Inferno*, except one, the Bolognese *Liber Memorialium*, in which the three verses beginning "là 'v' è alcun" and ending "io vidi la speranza de' beati" are missing. Another verse of the same stanza is also missing and two other verses are unfinished. Of the other stanzas the first is the only complete one, and the last two are missing. (Cf. Scherillo 1, 345, and Carducci, Vol. XVIII, pp. 132-34.) These facts ought to exclude any interpretation based on the mere possibility of interpolation or rewriting.

B. — *Alcun* means Dante. *Che perder lei s'attende*: who expects or fears to lose Beatrice, because she is destined for Paradise, whereas he is a sinful man. *E che dirà ne lo inferno, ecc.* is a poetical exaggeration expressing the poet's humble sense of sinfulness in comparison with the holiness of Beatrice, but not a settled conviction that he will be damned. It does not refer to a future poem by Dante.

D'Ancona, ed. and *op. cit.* 299-306. Casini, ed. Barbi in *BSDIt.* IV, 8-9 and X, 97-99. Salvadori in *N.Ant.* 1^o ottobre, 1896, pp. 385-

96; 16 gennaio, 1904, p. 314; and *op. cit.* 73-75; 156-74; 175-90. Rossi in *BSDIt.* XV, 85-86. I have not seen Carrara, E., *Presagi di dannazione*. In *Arcadia*, Vol. IV, 1921. Cf. *StD.* VI, 155.

D'Ancona (ed. 144) sees in the passage "un segno dei terrori religiosi che già preoccupavano di quando in quando l'animo del poeta," and Salvadori (174) sees in the whole poem "la contraddizione tra il presentimento di dovere un giorno andare all' inferno, e la grazia data a Beatrice che chi le ha parlato non può finir male." Barbi seems to hold that Dante is expressing something like a real conviction that he is destined to be damned: "Non c'è dubbio: il senso più ovvio... è che alcuno dei mortali, dannato, avrebbe vantato ai suoi compagni di pena d'aver visto in terra la speranza dei beati." *BSDIt.* X, 98. He quotes the canzone *Lo doloroso amor* (referred to also by Salvadori, 156), but in that canzone the damnation is hypothetical: "e se del suo peccar pace no i rende." Barbi is also prepared to admit that *alcun* may include others beside Dante.

The poet has put these words into the mouth of God, and they cannot therefore be a poetical exaggeration, as they might be if the poet himself were uttering them. One must either suppose (as I have done) that God is saying that "*alcun*" fears to lose Beatrice and consequently to be damned — in which case the words contain no assertion as to the fate of "*alcun*" — or else that God is "saying that "*alcun*" will be damned. In neither case can the words: "e che dirà ne lo inferno" be understood as a poetical exaggeration or the expression of a despairing mood. To contend that the putting of the condemnation of "*alcun*" i.e., Dante, into the mouth of God is itself a poetical exaggeration, is to accuse the poet of handling the Deity irreverently, of using God as a puppet to express the author's own transient emotions; since the announcement that Dante is destined to be damned would be repudiated immediately after and throughout the rest of the *Vita Nuova*, in spite of its having been made by God himself. It is almost as if the poet had said: "Parla Dio, — ma forse non dice sul serio."

C. — *Alcun* means Dante. *Che perder lei s'attende*: who expects or fears to lose her. *E che dirà ne lo inferno, ecc.*: but who, if he do descend to hell (i.e., if he be damned), will at least be able to say that he has seen Beatrice.

Federn, tr. 143. Zonta, ed. Zonta refers appropriately to *Lo doloroso amor*. His short comment and that of Federn do not explain in what sense Dante expects or fears to lose Beatrice, or why they understand *E che dirà, ecc.* to be an hypothetical sentence. Nor do they say whether Dante's having seen Beatrice will make him immune from the pains of hell. Nevertheless their interpretation, as far as it goes, seems to me substantially acceptable.

D. — *Alcun* means Dante. *Che perder lei s'attende*: who is in fear of losing her. *E che dirà ne lo inferno ecc.*: and who will explain to mortals below, that is on earth, the significance of the presence of Beatrice among them.

Witte, 1, 22. Guerri in *GSLIt.* LXXIV, 172-73, and *ed. cit.*

Witte makes the suggestion tentatively. Guerri cites Dante *Epistole* vi, 2: "Eterni pia providentia Regis, qui dum celestia sua bonitate perpetuat, infera nostra despiciendo non deserit..." and mediæval expositors of the Bible, as illustrated in Boccaccio's commentary on the *Commedia*, according to whom there is an inferno "superiore" which is experienced "nella vita presente, piena di pene, di angosce e di peccati."

This interpretation is not indefensible and might also be supported by the sentence of Boccaccio (3, Vol. I, p. 41): "... il quarto e ultimo è Plutone, iddio del ninferno, cioè la terra, più bassa che alcuno altro elemento," but the Latin "infera" might well be applied to the earth as compared with heaven, without meaning the same as the Italian "inferno". Mazzoni (*Misc.R.T.* 143) has pointed out the parallelism between the second and third stanzas of *Donne che avele*: the second ends with the mention of "lo inferno," and the third with the words "non po mal finir chi l'ha parlato." Guerri's interpretation of *malnati* (*ed. cit.*) "vuol dire nati col peccato d'origine, ch' è il comune destino di tutti quanti gli uomini" is not borne out by Dante's use of the word in *Inf.* v, 7; xviii, 76; xxx, 48 (*cf.* Ciuffo, 7, and Ciafardini in *RCLIt.* XXVI, 103-05); and we might add *Conv.* IV, xxviii, 19. My own persuasion that "ne lo inferno" in our passage means *in hell* is founded on the comparison with the third stanza of *Lo doloroso amor*, where, in a similar context, the reference to the veritable hell is unequivocal, although the word *inferno* does not occur.

E. 1. — *Alcun* does not mean Dante exclusively or particularly, but "più d'uno," that is, all those — including Dante — who perceive the celestial quality of Beatrice, among whom are some who will be damned. *Che perder lei s'attende*: who are in fear of losing her, because they realise their inferiority and the possibility of their being damned. *E che dirà ne lo inferno* refers to those who will really be damned: they will testify regretfully that they were granted the opportunity of being saved. There is no reference to a future work by Dante, but only evidence that Beatrice, heaven, the earth-dwellers, and hell were already associated in his mind.

Mazzoni, in *Misc. R.T.* 131-38 and in *BSDIt.* V, 177-84. D'Ovidio 1,326-32, Parodi in *BSDIt.* V, 73-75.

This interpretation seems to have been anticipated by Tommaso, ed. (Vol. I, p. xxxiii). Mazzoni, who gave it its full form and explanation, held at first that *io vidi la speranza de' beati* expresses the satisfaction of those of the damned who have seen Beatrice, in their superiority over the others. Later he accepted the opinion of Gorra (see Interpretation E. 2.) that it is an expression of regret rather than of boasting. Parodi accepted Mazzoni's interpretation as it was before this alteration was made. D'Ovidio accepted it understanding that Mazzoni's "più d'uno" means "i cor villani," which is not accurate.

Mazzoni paraphrases the words of God as follows: "... è giusto ch' ella rimanga un altro poco a far beato di sè il mondo, dove più d'uno, vedendola, pensa, come voi, che quella è cosa del cielo, scesa dal cielo tra gli uomini a mostrare un miracolo, e si aspetta

di averla a perdere, sempre che paragona sè con lei; chè veramente più d'uno di quelli che l'han vista andrà poi all' Inferno, ecc." *MiscRT.* 135. And again: "Resti per ora Beatrice in Terra, dove più d'uno vive con timore (s'attende) di averla poi a perdere, come di fatto la perderà chi, essendo in peccato, si lasci sfuggire la miracolosa e fugace occasione del salvarsi perchè dal *vedere* Beatrice non passerà al *parlare* a lei ..." *BSDIt.* V, 183.

According to this interpretation the persons referred to in the words "alcun che perder lei s'attende" are not the same as those referred to in the words "e che dirà ne lo inferno, ecc." The latter are only *some* of those who live in fear of losing Beatrice. Dante himself may be included among the former but not among the latter. In other words, a second *alcun* is understood in the sentence "e [alcun] che dirà ne lo inferno, ecc." Such an understanding need not be objected to on syntactical grounds, but it is reasonable to mistrust an interpretative device that is adopted in order to avoid having Dante condemn himself to hell. Certainly the more natural understanding is that the "alcun che perder lei s'attende" is the same person (or persons) who "dirà ne lo inferno, ecc."

This interpretation ignores the circumstances in which *Donne che avete* was written, that is, that it was written when the poet was still grieving over the aversion of Beatrice. For although he has made up his mind to expect no ordinary correspondence in love from her, and although the canzone is not addressed to her directly, the last stanza shows that it was directed to her and intended for her reading. This impression is confirmed by the canzone *Lo doloroso amor*, which was certainly written about the same time, and probably just before *Donne che avete*, and by the contemporary canzone *Ben aggia l'amoroso*.

It has not been sufficiently considered that, no matter how many people may have been benefited by the sight and acquaintance of Beatrice, she is for the author of the *Vita Nuova*, as later in the *Commedia*, Dante's own personal saviour. The ladies of chapter xviii, who are presumably friends of Beatrice, are interested only in what she may be to him, and so are the ladies of *Ben aggia l'amoroso*. It is to "ladies who have intelligence of love" that the canzone is addressed, "chè non è cosa da parlarne altrui," and it is therefore reasonable to suppose that "nostra parte" of verse 22 means the "parte" of Dante and these ladies, and not that of humanity in general. In view of these considerations it seems unlikely that the poet's own individuality has been indistinguishably submerged among an immense number of persons for whose advantage Beatrice is allowed to remain on Earth.

E. 2. — *Alcun* means those, and only those, of the "cor villani" mentioned in the third stanza who resist the influence of Beatrice. *Che perder lei s'attende*: who are destined to be damned. *E che dirà ne lo inferno, ecc.* means they will testify regretfully that they were granted the opportunity of being saved.

Gorra, 129-43 and *Il primo accenno alla D.C., ecc.* Piacenza, 1898, revd. Mazzoni in *BSDIt.* V, 177-84.

According to this interpretation the mercy of God is being exercised on behalf of the whole of humanity, with the notable

exception of "alcun". The latter are destined to be damned, but even they will testify in hell to the mercifulness of God. It is straining the meaning of "s'attende" to interpret it: "comprende, sa, dovrà" (132). Gorra uses these three words as if they were synonymous, but *comprende* and *sa* are quite different from *dovrà*. *Attendarsi* means, as Gorra admits, *aspettarsi*, and *aspettarsi* means 'to anticipate', as it does in the passage he cites from Boccaccio, in which the words "o voi aspettate d'esser vinti e sommersi" mean in idiomatic English: "otherwise you are in imminent danger of being defeated and drowned." More incredible still is it that the words of God should not even mention those for whose sake Beatrice is to be allowed to remain on Earth. As for the "alcun" who already know ("comprende, sa") that they are destined to be damned, they could not say truthfully that they were granted the opportunity of being saved.

E. 3. — *Alcun* means the *cor villani* of the third stanza: they are destined to be damned. Dante neither includes himself in their number nor excludes himself from it, he is in doubt as to his own fate. *Che perder lei s'attende*: who expect to lose Beatrice because a person of her celestial quality cannot be long for this world. *E che dirà ne lo inferno, ecc.* means that even the damned who have seen Beatrice will derive some comfort from that recollection.

Proto, in *GD*. XIV, 61-63.

The "cor villani" are not the kind of persons of whom it can be said that they "expect to lose" Beatrice: her departure would be a relief to them, not a loss. Their experience on meeting Beatrice, described in the third stanza — "gitta nei cor villani Amore un gelo, per che onne lor pensero agghiaccia e pere" — is so different from that of Dante that one cannot suppose he regards himself as, possibly, a *cor villano*. It is also improbable that God should provide for the relief of the suffering in hell of those who have been justly condemned.

E. 4. — *Alcun* means "più d'uno," and specifically those well-disposed persons (perhaps friends of Dante) who perceive the celestial quality of Beatrice but are nevertheless destined not to avail themselves of the blessing of her presence among them.

Scarano, in *ZRPh*. XXXVI, 346-49.

This modification of Mazzoni's interpretation is prompted by Scarano's reasonable conviction that it is incongruous for some damned souls to address others as "mal nati" unless they themselves belong to a category which can be distinguished from that of those they are addressing. But Scarano supposes that "mal nati" means persons of evil character or disposition, whereas Dante seems to have used the expression always as implying an unfortunate predestination. (Cf. the passages cited under Interpretation D.) The only kind of person who, on finding himself in hell, might reasonably address the others as "mal nati" would be one who for some reason happened to be immune from the torments suffered by the others. Dante imagines himself to be such a person in *Lo doloroso amor*. Cf. also Ciafardini in *RCLIt*. XXVI, 103-05.

E. 5. — *Alcun* means all human beings who will be damned. *Che perder lei s'attende*: who are going to be damned. *E che dirà ne lo*

inferno is merely putting in the mouths of these persons the statement that, during their life, they enjoyed the acquaintance of Beatrice.

De Labusquette, 630-36.

He understands — as does everyone except Gorra — that the mercy of God is being exercised for the sake of “alcun”. But if the meaning of “alcun” be restricted so as to include only those who will be damned, excluding any who may possibly be saved, the merciful act allowing Beatrice to remain on earth becomes, in as far as it is a merciful act, an almost useless gesture. It would provide undeserving persons a short period of possible but doubtful happiness. The improbability of the idea that the presence of Beatrice on Earth is here thought of in relation to the whole of humanity has already been mentioned. Cf. *supra*, Interpretation E. 1.

MORRATI, MORRATI

The commentary accompanying those poems of the *Vita Nuova* which are narrative always elaborates the story a little, adding some details and interpreting some of the words in a sense which would not be understood without the commentary. The narrative poems referred to are the sonnets *A ciascun alma* (III), *Cavalcando l'altr'ier* (IX), *Io mi senti' svegliar* (XXIV), and the canzone *Donna pietosa* (XXIII).

In the case of the sonnets the reason for these additions and interpretations is never difficult to imagine. Some of them seem merely to complete an account which, in the sonnet, needed to be as succinct as possible: so in the commentary on the first sonnet Love says: "Ego dominus tuus" and "Vide cor tuum" whereas he is silent in the verse account of the dream. Others are suggested by the author's love of symbolism, for example, the fire-coloured cloud in which Love appears, in the commentary on the same sonnet, and the colour of the cloth in which the lady is wrapped. Special interpretations, such as the explanation given in chapter IX that the journey mentioned in the sonnet was displeasing to the author because it separated him from his "beatitudine", or the explanation of the name "Giovanna" in chapter XXIV, are suitable enough in the light of the poet's maturer view, when he composed the book, of the events narrated in the poems; and for the

same reason it is suitable that in chapter ix Love should be made to call the poet's love for the ladies 'of the defence' "simulato amore," although it is not qualified in that way in the sonnet. Nor is it unnatural, considering that later state of mind, that the poet should add, in chapter iii, the detail that Love moves heavenward with Beatrice, and, in chapter ix, that Love gazes now and then upon the beautiful flowing river, for the purpose of implying an interpretation which the reader is able to supply. None of these modifications of the story as given in the verse conflict with that story, and none of them make the narrative difficult to understand, but it is otherwise with the commentary on the canzone *Donna pietosa*.

To begin with, the forty-second verse of the poem contains that difficult sentence, "che mi dicean pur: — Morràti, morràti," which is the occasion of an unusually long note in Barbi's edition where the interpretations of Rajna and Casini are discussed.¹ The corresponding sentence in the prose commentary is: "che mi diceano: 'Tu pur morrai'," which, at first sight, would seem to mean "thou too wilt die," and is so taken by Rajna. Neither Rajna nor Barbi, however, could believe that "pur morràti, morràti" has the same meaning, no doubt because, if so, the emphatic word *tu* would have to be understood as contained in the reflexive verb-form "morràti," and a construction in which "pur" modifies a pronoun that is missing would be exceedingly strange. Accordingly they agree in making "pur" modify "dicean", a construction which occurs frequently in Dante, and Rajna expresses the opinion that the recurrence of the word "pur" in the corresponding prose passage is accidental, or without interpretative intention.² Accordingly Barbi understands the verse to mean: 'who kept saying to me: thou wilt die, thou wilt die'.

Casini's belief was that both in the verse and in the prose "pur" should be taken with "tu" (understood in the verse) and with the meaning: 'thou only wilt die', according to

which interpretation it would be understood that the passing of Beatrice was no death in the ordinary sense.³ Needless to say the meaning 'only' is frequent enough for 'pure' in old Italian. Barbi objects reasonably that, apart from the absence of examples where the subject pronoun modified by 'pure' is omitted, there is no indication elsewhere in this chapter that the death of Beatrice is not regarded as a genuine death, but there is plenty of evidence to the contrary.

Gorra preferred to interpret the saying in both passages as "thou certainly wilt die."⁴ The meaning "certainly" attributed to *pure* is defensible, but to apply the word, in this sense, to *morràti* of the verse, is far more suitable than to apply it to *morraì* in the prose, for *tu pur morraì*, coming immediately after the mention of the inevitable death of Beatrice, cannot help but suggest to the reader that *pure* belongs to *tu* and means *also*, and Dante must have been aware that this latter meaning would be suggested.

I prefer another different interpretation which I will mention later, but in the meantime let us suppose that verse forty-two means either as Barbi thinks (putting *pur* with *dicean*) 'who kept on saying: thou wilt die, thou wilt die!', or, as Gorra thinks, 'who said: thou wilt certainly die, thou wilt die!' and let us see whether these interpretations suffice to make verse and commentary intelligible.

The canzone begins by relating how certain ladies, who were near where the poet was lying ill, on hearing him weeping, approach and awake him, begging to be told what is the matter, whereupon he tells them the dream that has afflicted him (stanzas I and II). In the prose commentary those circumstances are given last, and the dream is related first. There is no incongruity in the different order: there is no reason why the author should not, if only for the sake of variety, prefer a different order in his commentary, while in the poem he was no doubt follow-

ing the rhetorical precept which requires the more important matter to be placed last.⁵ The disagreements between verse and prose are in the two accounts of the dream and of the thoughts which are described as preceding it.

In the poem the author tells us (stanzas III and IV) that while he was reflecting on the precarious tenure of his life (presumably because of his weakness and pain) Love wept in his heart. This is a poetical way of saying that his sad thoughts about himself were diverted to his lady. The thought of his lady defines itself as the reflection that his lady being mortal will, like himself, die some time ("*Ben converrà che la mia donna mora*"), and this definite thought affects him so shockingly that, shutting his eyes in his weakness, he allows his faculties to wander uncontrolled, and then appear to his imagination certain faces of ladies "*crucciati*", that is, either 'tormented' or 'angry'. These faces, according to the above-mentioned interpretations, say to him repeatedly: 'thou wilt die, thou wilt die!', or else they say to him: 'thou certainly wilt die, thou wilt die!'. Then the threatening nightmare invades his mind, and there passes before him a phantasmagoria of terrifying events. He sees ladies going along a way, dishevelled, weeping and wailing; the sun darkens and the stars come out, and sun and stars shed tears; birds fall to the ground in their flight; there is an earthquake; and finally, in a lull, such as may naturally follow such a rapid series of terrible events, there appears the pale face of a man who, with faint voice, announces the death of Dante's lady: "*morta è la donna tua, ch' era sì bella.*"

Next comes the vision of the soul of Beatrice rising, like a little cloud, to heaven, followed by angels crying *Hosanna*! And then the poet is led by Love to see the body of his lady being prepared for burial. At the sight of her peaceful face he begins to desire death for himself, having overcome all his repugnance to it.

So much for that part of the poem which concerns us. Be-

fore we pass to the commentary let me draw attention to a perplexing matter in the poetical account of the dream considered in the light of these interpretations. The poet's first sadness over the danger of death to himself is balanced by his reconciliation with death in the presence of the body of the lady. The dream seems to be concerned with her death alone, for the darkening of the sun, the earthquake, and the other awful phenomena are suggested by those which occurred at the death of Christ, and which are said to have accompanied that of Julius Caesar, Romulus, and Roland.⁶ The whole dream is caused by the shocking realization of the mortality of Beatrice which descends upon the mind of the poet, banishing his first thought about his own danger. And yet, at the very beginning of the dream, arise those tormented or angry faces of women who threaten him with death, and say nothing of the death of Beatrice. It would seem as if the dreamer's mind had gone back again to the fear of his own death, although the events of the dream are related to her death, not to his. The utterance of these women seems to me incoherent as interpreted, and they are perplexing in themselves. Are they sad over the impending death of Dante, and, if so, why do they declare it to him so pitilessly? Why do they not behave like the living ladies about him, who rouse him and comfort him? But are they *angry* with him, and if so why? Who are they? Are they impersonal apparitions or are they faces that he knows? The man who appears to announce to him the death of Beatrice seems sympathetic, but these seem to be unfriendly faces.⁷ Let us leave these questions until we have looked at Dante's own exposition of the poem.

In the prose commentary, which was written at least more than a year after the canzone, the author says that on the ninth day of his illness (the mystical number which occurs so often in the commentary but never in the poems themselves) there came to him, in the midst of his acute

pain, a thought which was of his lady. This first thought is not mentioned in the verse. And when he had thought of her for some time he returned to his own condition, and considering how precarious was his life even when in health he began to weep over so much misery. Then occurs to him the thought of the mortality of Beatrice ("Di necessitate convene che la gentilissima Beatrice alcuna volta si muoia"). This thought has upon him the same powerfully distressing effect it has on him in the poem, and his mind begins to wander. There appear to him certain faces of dishevelled women (notice, not "visi di donne crucciati" but "visi di donne scapigliate") who say to him: "Tu pur morrai," which may mean either "thou too wilt die" or "thou wilt certainly die." Immediately after appear other terrible faces (not said to be faces of women this time) that say to him: "Thou art dead," another incident not to be found in the verse. Then his mind loses its reckoning to such an extent that he does not know where he is. There next appear to him all the sights that are mentioned in the corresponding place in the verse: ladies going along the way dishevelled ("scapigliate", the same adjective that has been used two sentences before), mourning exceedingly; the sun darkening and the stars appearing, and both shedding tears; birds falling as they fly; great earthquakes; lastly the face of a friend who announces the death of Beatrice.

Then, as in the verse, occurs the vision of the ascent to heaven of the soul of Beatrice, and Dante is led, as in the verse, to see the body, which sight affects him as it does in the verse.

The chief alterations which the account in the canzone has undergone in the prose commentary are as follows: —

1. The thought of Beatrice is made to come first, as preliminary to all the other thoughts and imaginations.
2. The "visi di donne... crucciati" has been changed to "visi di donne scapigliate."
3. "Pur morràti, morràti!" has been explained as mean-

ing "tu pur morrai": this is not an alteration according to Casini and Gorra, but it is so according to Rajna and Barbi.

4. There have been introduced into the story some more faces, horrible faces which declare to the poet that he is dead.

It should be noted, too, that in the prose there is an unpleasant repetition of the adjective "scapigliate" which corresponds both to the "crucciati" of st. III, verse 13, and to the "disciolte" of st. IV, verse 4.⁸

Pondering on the reasons for these alterations has led me to an interpretation of lines 13 and 14 of stanza 3, which I offer as an hypothesis that has at least the merit of explaining the difference between the prose and the verse.

visi di donne m'apparver crucciati,
che mi dicean pur: — Morràti, morràti —⁹

Let us see first whether "crucciati" means 'angry' or 'tormented.' Of the ten examples of the adjective-participle *crucciato* and the verb *crucciare* that occur in the writings of Dante, four are doubtful enough to be discarded as not suitable evidence, two of *crucciato* and two of *crucciare*,¹⁰ but the remaining six examples, three of the adjective and three of the verb, are not doubtful: in all of them *crucciato* means 'angry', and *crucciare* means either 'to be angry' or 'to anger'.¹¹

The belief that in our passage too *crucciati* means 'angry' is supported by the impression that the cry which these women utter is a cry of anger. They say "morràti, morràtil" and, although the verb is not in the imperative mood, one cannot help being reminded of the cry *muoia, muoia!* which was forbidden by law, with heavy penalty, in Florence, because it was the usual public incitement to violence.¹² Dante uses it in this sense when he is speaking of the Sicilian Vespers: —

... se mala signoria, che sempre accora
li popoli soggetti, non avesse
mosso Palermo a gridar: "Mora, mora!"¹³

and one is also reminded of another passage of the *Vita Nuova*:

e per la ebrietà del gran tremore
le pietre par che gridin: "Moia, moia."¹⁴

where the cry of the stones is unquestionably hostile.

Another example which has a peculiar interest of its own for us is that where the representation of the martyrdom of St. Stephen is described:

Poi vidi genti accese in foco d'ira
con pietre un giovinetto ancider, forte
gridando a sè pur: "Martira, martira!"¹⁵

I mean that this example is like ours in that it has a *pur* before the repeated exclamation.

I admit that I cannot prove that this "*morràti, morràti*" is not merely an expression of sorrow, and that *crucciati* does not merely mean 'distressed' or 'tormented', but the poet's usage of *crucciare*, and the examples of expressions similar to this exclamation, are sufficient to persuade me of the probability that this is an exclamation of anger, especially as I know of no other similar examples which do not express anger.

If Dante had simply said *visi crucciati* and not *visi di donne crucciati*, I should be inclined to think that they were only threatening faces, without any personality, such as might appear in any nightmare, like those "*visi diversi, orribili a vedere*" that he introduced into the prose commentary, which Rajna called "*ceffi di demoni*."¹⁶ But since they are faces of women, one naturally wonders what women would have anything against Dante, and why should his uncontrolled imagination call them to life as soon as the appalling thought has flashed upon him that Beatrice will die?

To put the matter briefly, I think that "morràti, morrà-ti" means not *tu ti morrai* but *ella ti morrà*; not 'thou wilt die' but *she will die*.¹⁷ First comes the appalling thought: "Ben converrà che la mia donna mora," and then arise the angry faces of women who cry: "Sì sì, ti morrà, ti morrà!": the indirect object *ti* echoes the possessive idea in "la mia donna," which is repeated again at the end of the dream in "morta è la donna tua." These, I think, are the faces of ladies who had reason to be jealous of Beatrice, faces which rise like images of furies in the poet's wretched memory when he is stricken with the prospect of her loss — faces of women who would be glad of her death.

Nowhere, of course, in the *Vita Nuova* does Dante say anything about ladies who were jealous of Beatrice; their presence would be altogether incongruous in this book, in which the character of Beatrice does not admit of rivals in her life-time. No poem that spoke of such rivals could be included in the book; or, if it were included, their recollection would have to be effaced. That is why, in the prose, these ladies become *scapigliate* instead of *cruciate*, and that is why they say not "morràti" but "tu pur morrai," and the *pur*, which in the verse modified *dicean*, in the prose is made to modify *tu*.

It is evident, however, from the story and from other poems of the canzoniere, that there were women who had cause for jealousy. There is "quella ch' è sul numer de le trenta" who was the poet's favourite when he wrote the sonnet *Guido, i'vorrei*; there is the second lady 'of the defence' who caused the disaster of the tenth chapter of the *Vita Nuova*, who had been courted most ardently and then dropped abruptly as soon as Beatrice took umbrage; to say nothing of others about whom we have little or no information.

Let us turn to the canzone again, neglecting the commentary, and assuming that my hypothesis is correct : —

While I was thinking on my fragile life, seeing the slight-

ness of its tenure, Love wept within my heart, wherein he dwells, so that my soul was so dismayed that sighing in my thought I said : "My lady too will some time have to die." I then became so terribly dismayed, I closed my eyes heavy with feebleness, and all my faculties were so o'erwhelmed that they went wandering uncontrolled; and then in my imagination, beyond reality and consciousness, faces of women rose at me in anger, and kept on saying to me: "She'll die, she will."

By understanding the third stanza in this way, the whole poem becomes simple. After once thinking of the death of Beatrice, the poet never returns to reflect on his own danger; only at the end of the dream, gazing on her dead face, he longs for the death at which he had at first trembled.

Dante chose to include this poem in the *Vita Nuova*, probably because it is the most beautiful of his few canzoni, and probably because the substance of its narrative was historically true and it had been written on the occasion of that illness and that dream. But he felt obliged to do something to obliterate the one jarring incident of the dream, which spoiled it for his purpose. Without his commentary, I think, the verses would have been understood as I have explained them, but Dante's plan included the interpretation of such poems as needed to be readjusted to the unworldly, religious view he had of his relation to Beatrice at the time when he composed the book. Part of the third stanza of this poem needed to be explained away to fit it into that view. He saw that "crucciati" might express grief as well as anger, and he paraphrased "visi di donne crucciati" with "visi di donne scapigliate," although he had to use *scapigliate* again in the next sentence but one, to correspond to *disciolte* in the verse. He saw that *morràti* could be taken to mean 'thou wilt die' as well as 'she will die', and that the *pur* might at a pinch be taken with *morràti* and an understood *tu* so as to mean "tu pur morrai," and he interpreted the sentence in that

way. Aware, however, of the strangeness of having the thought of his own death recur just when it had been banished by the overwhelming thought of the death of his lady, and of having it recur in the form of a prophecy which was to remain unfulfilled, he introduced the other "*visi diversi*" to declare the fulfilment of the prophecy, and no doubt these additional indefinite faces were expected to cast some of their vagueness upon the *visi di donne*. By these additions he succeeded in producing, in the account of the dream, a constant balancing of the two recurring thoughts — about Beatrice and about himself, about her death and his. The thought of Beatrice must come first, so he made another preliminary addition at the very beginning of the account. In this way the following order was established:

1. He thinks of Beatrice.
2. He thinks of his own possible death.
3. He thinks of the death of Beatrice.
4. Faces of women prophecy his own death.
5. Other faces announce that he is dead.
6. Terrible sights foretell the death of Beatrice.
7. A friend announces the death of Beatrice.

The prose account, though twice as complicated as that of the verse, is nevertheless well balanced, but it has not gained in effectiveness by the additions, and the tragic effect of the imagined death of Beatrice is weakened by the unfortunate recurrence, immediately after that stunning thought, of the poet's alarm about his own danger.¹⁴

NOTES

- 1, p. 130. — Barbi ed. 61, n. 6.
- 2, p. 130. — D'Ancona ed. 176-77.
- 3, p. 131. — Casini ed. 125. So also Federzoni, 2, p. 33.

4, p. 131. — Gorra, 146-47.

5, p. 132. — Cf. Barbi in *BSDIt.* X, 92-94.

6, p. 133. — Cf. Proto, in *GD.* XIV, 68-75, where interesting precedents for the vision of Beatrice ascending to heaven are also given.

7, p. 133. — Some such perplexity seems to have stirred doubts in the minds of two fifteenth-century copyists: the Strassburg MS. L.Ital. 7 has "visi di donne m'apparver *turbati*," and the Florentine MS. Panc. 9 substitutes "*per sorte*" for "*crucciati*". Cf. Beck ed. 124.

8, p. 135. — The following table illustrates the differences between the account in prose and that in verse. These differences are by themselves sufficient to refute the theory of Federzoni (2, 31-41) that the canzone was composed for the sake of the prose, but cf. Barbi in *BSDIt.* X, 92-94, and Parodi in *BSDIt.* XX, 229-31.

V.N. xxiii

Prose	Verse
Io dico che ne lo nono giorno... a me giunse uno pensiero lo quale era de la mia 3 donna. E quando ei pensato alquanto di lei, ed io ritornai pensando a la mia debilitata vita; e veggendo come leggero era lo suo durare..., si cominciai a piangere...	29 Mentr'io pensava la mia frale vita, e vedea 'l suo durar com'è leggero, plansemi Amor nel core, ove dimora;...
Onde, sospirando forte, dicea fra me me- desimo: "Di necessitate convene che la gen- tilissima Beatrice alcuna volta si muoia."...	33 che sospirando dicea nel pense- ro: — Ben converrà che la mia donna mora. —
4 apparvero a me certi visi di donne <i>scapi- gliate</i> , che mi diceano: "Tu pur morrai." E poi...	41 visi di donne m'apparver <i>cru- ciati</i> , che mi dicean pur: — Morràti, morràti. —
m'apparvero certi visi diversi e orribili a vedere, li quali mi diceano: "Tu se' mor- to"...	
5 e vedere mi pareva donne andare <i>scapigliate</i> piangendo per via...	46 e veder donne andar per via <i>disciolte</i> , qual lagrimando, e qual traendo gual...
6 "... la tua mirabile donna è partita di questo secolo."	56 morta è la donna tua, ch'era si bella.

9, p. 135. — This is the reading in the edition of Barbi. I prefer it to the "Morra'ti, morra'ti" of the *Testo Critico d. Soc. Danl. it.*

10, p. 135. — The doubtful examples are as follows :

1. *Inf.* xxii, 132:

...non altrimenti l'anitra di botto,
quando 'l falcon s'appressa, giù s'attuffa,
ed ei ritorna su *crucciato* e rotto.

Here *crucciato* may well mean either 'angry' or 'crestfallen', i.e., distressed, tormented.

2. *Purg.* xxii, 39:

...quand' io intesi là dove tu chiamo,
crucciato quasi a l'umana natura:
 Perchè non reggi tu, o sacra fame
 de l'oro, l'appetito de' mortali?

It has always been doubtful whether the meaning of this quotation corresponds to that of the Virgilian passage, and the doubt affects the meaning of *crucciato*; cf. D'Ovidio 2, Vol. V, pp. 177-200.

3. *Inf.* xvi, 72:

...cortesìa e valor dî se dimora
 ne la nostra città sì come suole,
 o se del tutto se n'è gito fora:
 chè Guglielmo Borsiere, il qual si duole
 con noi per poco, e va là coi compagni,
 assai ne *cruccia* con le sue parole...

The magnanimous Florentine souls who ask this question are concerned for the fame of their city which Guglielmo Borsiere, another Florentine recently arrived in Hell, has dishonoured by his report. It would be natural, then, to translate *ne cruccia*, 'distresses us', or 'torments us'; but Guglielmo had lived the latter part of his life at Ravenna, as we are told by the Anonimo Selmi, and it may be that the evil reports of this expatriated Florentine have roused indignation in the speaker, Iacopo Rusticucci.

4. *Inf.* xix, 31:

"chi è colui, maestro, che si *cruccia*
 guizzando più che gli altri suoi consorti"
 diss'io, "e cui più roggia fiamma succia?"

11, p. 135. — These examples are as follows:

1. *Inf.* xi, 89:

...tu vedrai ben perchè da questi felli
 sien dipartiti, e perchè men *crucciata*
 la divina vendetta li martelli.

2. *Inf.* xiv, 53:

se Giove stanchi 'l suo fabbro da cui
crucciato prese la folgore aguta
 onde l'ultimo dî percosso fui.

3. *Inf.* xxx, 1:

nel tempo che Iunone era *crucciata*
 per Semelè contra 'l sangue tebano...

4. V.N. xxxvii (xxxviii), 1-2:

Io venni a tanto per la vista di questa donna, che li miei occhi si cominciaro a dilettere troppo di vederla; onde molte volte me ne *crucciava* nel mio cuore ed aveamene per vile assai. Onde più volte bestemmiavala vanitade de li occhi miei, e dicea loro: "... ma quanto potete fate, chè io la vi pur rimembrerò molto spesso, maladetti occhi, chè mai, se non dopo la morte, non dovrebbero le vostre lagrime avere restate."

5. *Inf.* iii, 94:

"Caron non ti *crucciare*..."

6. *Inf.* xvii, 76:

Ed io, temendo no 'l più star *crucciasse*
lui che di poco star m'avea ammonito...

12, p. 135. — Cf. Davidsohn, Vol. IV, p. 163.

13, p. 136. — *Par.* viii, 75.

14, p. 136. — V.N. xv, 5.

15, p. 136. — *Purg.* xv, 108.

16, p. 136. — Rajna, in *VITT*, 160.

17, p. 137. — Needless to say the construction with the so-called "ethical dative" was as common in Dante's time as it is nowadays. Cf. Forese Donati's "se Dio ti salvi la Tana e'l Francesco"... Dante, *Rime*, p. 86.

18, p. 139. — The scribe whose writing "morratti, morratti" is preserved in the Magliab. MS. vii, 1103, mentioned by Rajna (D'Ancona ed. 176-77), may have understood that the verb is in the third person singular. The word would ordinarily be pronounced with a double *t*. That such a word should be made to rhyme with another which has a single *t* in the corresponding syllable would arouse no astonishment since it was a conventional practice. Some of the examples from Dante are as follows: *parlòmi*, *Purg.* xiv, 76, rhyming with *nomi* and *vuo'mi*; *fuci* *Purg.* xxix, 66, with *duci* and *luci*; *perdèsi*, *Purg.* xix, 122, with *presi* and *distesi*; *ne la*, *Purg.* xvii, 55, with *cela* and *vela*; *scimia*, *Inf.* xxix, 139, with *alchimia*, etc., etc.

VI

NON È DEL PRESENTE PROPOSITO

Beatrice is gone. She has been called, as was only just,¹ to glory under the standard of the queen of heaven, of whom she had always spoken with the greatest reverence. "And although," says Dante, "it would perhaps be agreeable at present to say something of her departure from us, it is not my intention to treat of the matter here for three reasons: the first is that it is not part of the present purpose, [as will appear] if we care to consult the preface which precedes this little book"...

What is there in the words of the preface, the "proemio", which defines the purpose of the book, that would exclude "trattare alquanto" of the death of Beatrice, as unsuitable to that purpose?

The "proemio" consists of two sentences, the first of which mentions the rubric in the "book of my memory," "Incipit vita nova," and the second is as follows : — "Sotto la quale rubrica io trovo scritte la parole le quali è mio intendimento d'assemblare in questo libello ; e se non tutte, almeno la loro sentenza." The words, therefore, which he finds in the book of his memory under the rubric do not contain any account of the death of Beatrice, or at least no such account as he is thinking of.

But does "parole" in the above passage mean *words*, or has it the special meaning of *verses* as Renier believed,² considering the extraordinary frequency with which

Dante uses *parole* in referring to the poems of the *Vita Nuova*?³ This latter meaning would furnish a solution of our difficulty, for there is no poem describing the death or departure of Beatrice, and so Dante may mean that to treat of that subject is beyond the scope of a book which is concerned only with verses preserved by his memory.⁴

In any case, however, we should have to extend the meaning of "parole" to include the explanation of verses, as well as verses themselves,⁵ for the *Vita Nuova* is as much prose as verse, and in chapter xxviii Dante says that the number nine has occurred frequently "tra le parole dinanzi," although the number nine is never mentioned in the verses. A further extension is also demanded by the second chapter, which is not concerned with any poem at all, and in which the word "parole" is applied to the Latin sentences: "Ecce deus fortior me," etc., "Apparuit jam beatitudo vestra," and the others: thus we should have to suppose that, in the proemio, "parole" means *notable sayings*, as well as verses and the explanation of verses.

Careful consideration of the whole of the preface cannot fail, I think, to lead us to banish all restrictions of the meaning of the word "parole" to any special sense. The author is using the illustration of the book of memory consistently, as he uses all his illustrations. The book is his memory, and the words of the book are his memories; the words in the book, under the heading "Incipit Vita Nova," are the memories of his new life of love. The convincing factor is that the author declares his intention of giving us all that is in the book under that heading, for he intends to give us the substance even of those words which he does not actually copy: "e se non tutte, almeno la loro sentenza."⁶

To return, then, to the first reason given in chapter xxviii for not speaking of the death of Beatrice, with its reference to the "proemio": it would seem to mean that

he words of the book of memory contain no account of "her departure from us": that the author has no memory of the departure of Beatrice, beyond the fact that she did depart, which he has already registered.

When one considers that all the remaining chapters of the *Vita Nuova* are more or less concerned with the death of Beatrice, it is not astonishing that the above apparently logical interpretation of the first reason has found little favour, or at best has been thought to need a great deal of explanatory modification.⁷

A plausible solution has been found in supposing that the words "trattare", "trattando", "trattato", used by the author six times in all in this short chapter, show that he had in mind a treatise — that is, a fairly long digression — on the significance of the lady's death: not a simple account of her departure but, as Barbi puts it, "subtle considerations" on the mission of Beatrice on earth and on her privileged state in heaven;⁸ or, as Flamini says, an explanation of how the death of Beatrice was both the end of her mission as "lady miracle" on earth, and the continuation of her normal life in heaven; or some part of what he was afterward to write of her in the *Commedia*.⁹ Such matters as these could not, of course, be found written in the book of his memory. These necessarily vague conjectures seem to me to be applicable as an explanation of the Second Reason, which is that, even if some account of the death of Beatrice were suitable, still he would be unable to treat of the matter adequately. But the First Reason is that to give even a simple account of the departure of Beatrice, "trattare alquanto," would be unsuitable to the subject of the book.

Those who explain that, in this place, Dante is thinking of the mysterious significance of the death and life of his lady have remained unimpressed by the astonishing gap that is here in the narrative of the *Vita Nuova*. I mean that, whereas in the previous part of the book numer-

ous small incidents have been the occasion of poems with the appropriate explanation of the events and the story of the author's thoughts and feelings at the time, the most important event of all — the death of Beatrice — is left with a bare announcement. What the reader would expect would be not a treatise on the "subtle matters" imagined by the interpreters just referred to, but a poem and a prose commentary narrating circumstances of the lady's death, as in the case of the other episodes, and above all giving some account of the poet's thoughts and feelings, or of words uttered, on the occasion of her death. Instead we have a dispassionate inquiry into the significance of the nines occurring in the previous part of the book, followed by a chapter which merely mentions a letter written by the author; and only after a period of silence follows the beautiful song of mourning which, however, contains none of the information longed for.

Of course the silence is no accident: it is powerfully dramatic; it shrouds the passing of Beatrice in awful mystery; and the author is offering an explanation for the absence of something, more probably something the reader might expect rather than a treatise which, however suitable, would not be anticipated.

Moreover "trattato" does not necessarily mean a treatise, nor does "trattare" necessarily mean to write a dissertation. In commenting on the canzone *Donne che avete*, Dante says: "la prima parte è proemio de le seguenti parole; la seconda è lo intento trattato...;"¹⁰ where "lo intento trattato" means, as Fraticelli explained, "l'argomento da me inteso," just as in the *Convivio*¹¹ the commentary on *Amor che ne la mente* says: "La seconda [parte] sono tutte e tre li versi seguenti, ne li quali si tratta quello che dire s'intende, coì la loda di questa gentile..." In the chapter following that containing *Donne che avete*, the poet says: "Onde io, pensando che appresso di cotale trattato bello era trattare alquanto d'Amore, ... propuosi di

dire parole ne le quali io *trattassi* d'Amore; e allora dissi questo sonetto, lo qual comincia: *Amore e'l cor gentil*."¹² At the beginning of the next chapter he continues: "Poscia che *trattai* d'Amore ne la soprascritta rima..."¹³ In other words, both in the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio* he uses the word *trattato* sometimes for the substantial part of a poem, as opposed to the introductory part, and sometimes for the whole poem. Also the word *trattato* is used not only for the didactic part of a poem, or for a whole poem because it is didactic, but for the substantial part of a poem, whether narrative or didactic, and for a whole poem whether narrative like *Donne che avete* or didactic like *Amore e'l cor gentil*. So the commentators of the *Commedia* used the words *narratio* and *tractatus* and the words *narrazione* and *trattato* interchangeably.¹⁴

Let us suppose, then, that Dante is here explaining his omission of the usual poem with its "ragione", narrating the circumstances of the death of Beatrice and his own thoughts and feelings at the time, and let us see whether the first of the motives given for that omission, that is, that those circumstances, thoughts and feelings are not part of his memories, is as inappropriate as it has sometimes been declared to be.¹⁵

I think the dramatic manner in which the death of Beatrice is presented in the *Vita Nuova* has never been sufficiently considered in this connection. The canzone *Donna Pietosa* and its commentary in chapter xxiii contained what might seem to be a premonition of her early death, but that apparent premonition was only a "fallace imaginare," a "vana fantasia," a "vana immaginazione" like that of a "farnetica persona," the product of a fevered brain.¹⁶ In chapter xxiv the poet has completely recovered from his illness and all fear of the death of Beatrice has been banished when she appears with Madonna Primavera, in the likeness of Love, to her happy worshipper, who can hardly understand the joy with which he is

filled: "E certo me pareva avere lo cuore sì lieto, che me non pareva che fosse lo mio cuore, per la sua nuova condizione." After the digression in chapter xxv, the poetry of praise — "lo stilo de la sua loda" — is resumed in chapter xxvi with the sonnets *Tanto gentile* and *Vede perfettamente*. During all this latter part of the story, he is perfectly at peace with himself. The mental conflict between differing theories of love, and the torment of soul caused by lingering earthly cravings, are things of the past. He understands his own love now, and is more than content with it.

Reflecting that he has not yet adequately expressed his present blissful state of mind and heart, he begins to make the canzone the first stanza of which is contained in chapter xxvii (xxviii).

Sì lungiamente m'ha tenuto Amore
e costumato a la sua signoria,
che sì com'elli m'era forte in pria,
così mi sta soave ora nel core.

He is still engaged with this poem, and has just finished one stanza when — Beatrice is gone. The hymn of peaceful deep-seated joy will never be written: the fragment is left like a broken column with no inscription. The next chapter — xxviii (xxix) — begins with the lamentation of Jeremiah: "Quomodo sedet sola civitas plena populol"

Calmly, with no other expression of emotion, the author records the fact that she has gone to glory under the standard of the blessed Virgin Mary. He has nothing to say of how she came to die, nothing of his own thoughts or feelings. Those who might naturally expect a poem and an account of these matters in prose must be satisfied with his explanation. He will give no such account for three reasons, the first of which is that this book is a record of his memories, as he has said in the preface.

Surely I am not mistaken in believing that Dante wishes us to understand that the death of Beatrice took him com-

pletely by surprise. He had no inkling of the impending catastrophe: she had not been ill, as he tells us later;¹⁷ she did not die in an ordinary way, she was translated. He is utterly without any memory of the event itself. All the memory he has, at the time of writing, is of the overwhelming grief which after some time found vent in the canzone *Li occhi dolenti*.

Dante's saying that an account such as might be expected could not be copied from the book of his memory, is his way of supplementing the effect on the reader produced by the sudden interruption of the canzone, and by the dispassionate style of the two following chapters. It is not only that her death happened so suddenly that he knew nothing of it at the time, but it also so stunned him that he had no memory of his sensations on hearing the news. Remember the "forte smarrimento" which set his mind wandering in delirium at the mere thought that Beatrice must sometime die,¹⁸ and consider what must have been the effect of the news of her death coming suddenly upon the poet absorbed in his new-found happiness.

The belief that the absence of memory of his sensations at the time of the catastrophe is part of the reason why an account of the departure of Beatrice would not be "del presente proposito" seems to be confirmed by the other passage of the *Vita Nuova* which is also said to be beyond the "proposito presente." I mean chapter xi, which contains the description of the effect upon Dante of the salutation of Beatrice. In chapter x, he tells us how the salutation was denied him, and then says: "E uscendo alquanto del proposito presente, voglio dare a intendere quello che lo suo salutare in me vertuosamente operava." Then follows chapter xi, and the first words of chapter xii are: "Ora, tornando al proposito, dico..."

To suppose that the expression "presente proposito" in the twenty-eighth chapter has not the same meaning as

"proposito presente" in the tenth, and that, in the latter place, "uscendo alquanto del proposito presente" means no more than that the immediate narrative is to be interrupted¹⁹ is far from satisfactory; and yet it is evident that a description of the author's feelings, on any of the occasions he mentions, is not beyond the scope of the book according to the "proemio", for those feelings might well be part of his memories²⁰. But let us see whether the feelings he speaks of in chapter xi are such as he can remember. His purpose is to give us some notion of the effect produced on him when Beatrice greeted him. He is aware that he will not be able to give an exact account of it, and so he uses the modest expression: "voglio dare a intendere, ecc." He is able to describe his feelings in expectation of the greeting, when she was approaching him, and also to describe the commotion within him when he was just about to receive the salutation, but as to the effect of the actual greeting, all he can say is that the "beatitudine" was intolerable, that Love possessed him so that he often moved like an inanimate body since the ecstasy exceeded his capacity. "E quando questa gentilissima salute salutava, non che Amore fosse tal mezzo che potesse obumbrare a me la intollerabile beatitudine, ma elli quasi per soverchio di dolcezza divenia tale, che lo mio corpo, lo quale era tutto allora sotto lo suo reggimento, molte volte si movea come cosa grave inanimata. Sì che appare manifestamente che ne le sue salute abitava la mia beatitudine, la quale molte volte passava e redundava la mia capacitate."

It was hersmile, when she spoketo him, that overwhelmed and defeated his senses, as we are told in the sonnet of chapter xxi:

Quel ch'ella par quando un poco sorride,
non si po dicer nè tenere a mente,
sì è novo miracolo e gentile,

and in the commentary: "Poscia quando dico: *Ogne dolcezza*, dico quello medesimo che detto è ne la prima parte, secondo due atti de la sua bocca ; l'uno de li quali è lo suo dolcissimo parlare, e l'altro lo suo mirabile riso; salvo che non dico di questo ultimo come adoperava ne li cuori altrui, però che *la memoria non puote ritenere lui* nè sua operazione."²¹ It was the smile of Beatrice that baffled him then as, with its heightened beauty in the *Paradiso*, it was to afterward, in spite of the poet's increased power of vision,²² and in chapter xi he is attempting to describe something the most important part of which his memory was unable to retain: that is why, I think, he considers that he is going somewhat beyond the scope of the book — "uscendo alquanto del proposito presente."

I conclude therefore that the first reason given by Dante, in chapter xxviii (xxix), for not presenting the usual poem and commentary — namely that such a "trattato" would not be "del presente proposito," according to the statement in the "proemio" — means that he had no memory of the circumstances of the death of Beatrice, and that, owing to the suddenness and shocking character of the event, he had no memory of his own feelings on becoming aware of it.

The second reason is as follows: "la seconda si è che, posto che fosse del presente proposito, ancora non sarebbe sufficiente la mia lingua a trattare come si converrebbe di ciò..." The adverbial expression "come si converrebbe" is enlightening, for by the use of that expression the author is admitting that if he had preserved memories of the death of Beatrice, or of his feelings at the time, he would have been able to give some account of them, although not an adequate account. The case is somewhat different from that of the vision in the thirty-third canto of the *Paradiso*, which, for lack of words, could not have been described at all, even if retained in the memory;²³ but an adequate account of her "partita da noi" would have involved an

explanation of the cause of the departure of Beatrice and of its significance, and so would have included some of those "sottili considerazioni" referred to by Barbi²⁴ and others, who offer them as an explanation of the first reason as well as the second.

Just as it seems natural to me to suppose that, in giving his first reason, Dante is explaining the absence of the usual poem and "ragione", on the ground that the proper subject of such poems and "ragioni" is his own memories of the events concerned, — which memories are lacking in this case, — so it seems inevitable to suppose that, in giving his second reason, he is thinking of how inadequate any account similar to others in the book would be, since it could not expound the purpose of the life and death of Beatrice and all that she had been and was still to him after her death, and could not but result in faint unworthy praise of his lady saint.²⁵ He is appalled by the thought of all that a suitable commentary on a suitable poem in this place would have to contain, and he is sure that no such suitable poem or commentary could be written.

The thought of how impossible it would be to praise Beatrice worthily leads him to the thought that in making the attempt he would be praising himself shamefully, and so he dismisses the whole matter with his third reason: "la terza si è che, posto che fosse l'uno e l'altro, non è convenevole a me trattare di ciò, per quello che, trattando, converrebbe essere me laudatore di me medesimo, la quale cosa è al postutto biasimevole a chi lo fae; e però lascio cotale trattato ad altro chiosatore."

That last word "chiosatore" would be entirely out of place if the "trattato" were merely an ordinary treatise. The author of a *treatise* on any subject is not a "chiosatore", not a *commentator*.²⁶ It seems evident that the poet is here thinking particularly of the commentary on the poem, which poem would be the chief part of the "tratta-

to". But why would Dante be obliged by such an exposition to praise himself?

From the time when, at nine years of age, he had first met the source of his happiness, his "Beatrice", his soul had been "betrothed" to Love,²⁷ and she had been the lady of his mind.²⁸ The later attractions of other inferior objects, natural to his age and necessary for his growth, had never dethroned this sovereign ideal affection.²⁹ He had cherished her alone with a love that was content with her kind salutation, which raised him to a spiritual ecstasy rivalled by no other joys. When that "salute" was withdrawn a new and passionate craving had centred all his still reverent desires upon her, banishing all others, and arousing within his sore and disappointed heart a storm of questionings as to the nature of love and the quality of his lady, which were no longer aesthetic literary exercises but matters of life and death to him. His unavailing efforts to regain her favour and the progress of his incessant turbulent reflections brought him at last to realize that, as he had dimly suspected from the first, she was no mere earthly woman, but that, on the contrary, she was a messenger from heaven, a representative of God on earth. From that time there had begun to dawn upon him the dazzling truth that she was the means of grace especially to him Dante, and that he had thus been singled out among men and favoured by God above all other mortals. Worldly thoughts of her became incongruous, thoughts of an amorous correspondence between them, even of the most ideal kind, appeared futile, and the love he bore her appeared clearly in its true light as a love for the goodness which she transmitted to him. She was his peculiar saviour, and to love her and praise her was more than enough joy, a more than sufficiently worthy occupation for him who was her earthly ward. No sooner was he at peace with himself in this new amazing knowledge, happy beyond the expression of words in the goodness of

his love, when she returned to heaven. She departed because her mission on earth was fulfilled: she had performed for this one man a task analogous in part to that performed by Christ for all men, for she had led him to the knowledge and love of the highest good.

To explain adequately the departure of Beatrice would be to make clear the fact that he himself was a singular exception among mortals; that he had been the object of a special mission from heaven; that his salvation and education had been deemed by God himself more important than that of others. This fact, which in the *Canzone Donne che avete* had been carefully veiled, would here have to be plainly asserted.

The third reason, then, is easily comprehensible, if we consider the already mentioned significance of the concluding sentence : "e però lascio cotale trattato ad altro chiosatore,"³⁰ which shows that the author is thinking less of the whole "trattato" than of the commentary on the usual poem. The poem is indeed presupposed, for there cannot be a "chiosatore" without something to "chiosare", but it is the "chiosatore" who would be obliged to praise Dante, because he could not avoid explaining the cause of the departure of Beatrice, an explanation which need not be contained in the words of the poem. If Dante were to discharge the office he would have to explain that he himself was the chief cause not only of her departure but also of her dwelling upon earth until now.

The "sottili considerazioni" hypothesis, which was intended to explain all three reasons, is applicable to the second and third but not to the first, for the first is the reason why there is no account at all of the departure of Beatrice,³¹ whereas the second and third are reasons why *no adequate account* can be given. The defenders of that hypothesis seem to have approached the three reasons as if the latter constituted a riddle the answer to which

must satisfy three conditions, and accordingly they asked themselves the question: What kind of an account of the death of Beatrice is it that, first, would not be part of Dante's memories; second, could not *as yet* be adequately explained by him; third, would necessitate self-praise? They were thus forced to find a vague, "blanket" explanation, covering all three conditions and supposing that the author had in mind a "treatise" such as is suggested by the last chapter of the *Vita Nuova*, and was later realized in the *Commedia*.

They were influenced by the expression "ancora non" of the second reason, understood as meaning *not yet*, which, so understood, seemed to anticipate the words of *Vita Nuova* XLII (XLIII): "io vidi cose che mi fecero proporre di non dire più di questa benedetta infino a tanto che io potesse più degnamente trattare di lei. E di venire a ciò io studio quanto posso..." Of course these latter words show that, at the time when he was composing the *Vita Nuova*, Dante was planning to write more of Beatrice later; but to suppose that in the sentence we are considering, "ancora non sarebbe sufficiente la mia lingua a trattare, come si converrebbe, di ciò," he is alluding to that plan, is rendered impossible by his saying, at the end of the same sentence: "e però lascio cotale trattato ad altro chiosatore."³² Nor is it possible to suppose that "ancora non" has any relation to the adverbs "a presente" and "qui" in "forse piacerebbe *a presente*" and "non è lo mio intendimento di trattarne *qui*," for all three of the "tre ragioni" are given as reasons for not treating of the matter "in this place" — "non è lo mio intendimento di trattarne *qui* per tre ragioni" — and the third reason (that he would have to praise himself) would apply, as far as his readers could understand, to any time and place as well as *here* and *now*. The words "a presente" and "qui" are abundantly accounted for by understanding that Dante is explaining the absence of a poem and its commen-

tary such as would naturally be expected by the reader *in this place*.

What then does "ancora non" mean? The passage is: "... *posto che fosse del presente proposito, ancora non sarebbe sufficiente la mia lingua a trattare come si converrebbe di ciò...*" The sentence beginning "ancora non" immediately follows the concessive clause introduced by "posto che": the "ancora non" balances and answers the "posto che." Now, in his prose, Dante uses *ancora* with a negative seven times to mean *not yet*,³³ but only two of these instances are comparable to our passage, because in only two is there a concessive clause preceding the "ancora non." These two examples are as follows:

E *avvegna che* per ragione umana queste oppinioni di sopra fossero fornite, e per sperienza non lieve, la veritade *ancora* per loro veduta *non fue...*³⁴

Onde *ponemo che* possibile fosse questo nono cielo non muovere, la terza parte del cielo sarebbe *ancora non* veduta in ciascuno luogo de la terra...³⁵

In neither of these examples does the *ancora non* balance and reply to the concessive expression; in both, instead, it follows the subject of the sentence to which it belongs, and this is, I think, the way in which Dante would have used *ancora non* in our passage if it had meant *not yet*.³⁶

My own conclusion is that, although it is not deniable that our *ancora non* may possibly mean *not yet*, all the evidence is against it; and, considering the position of *ancora* at the beginning of the sentence that follows the concessive clause introduced by *posto che*, I feel sure that it means *still*, in the sense of *nevertheless*, *even so*: "Granted that it (ciò) were suitable to the present purpose, *even so* my tongue would not be equal to the task of treating the matter properly."

Professor Grandgent's hypothesis that Dante is thinking of an ecstatic vision of Beatrice in heaven, and is so reminded of the vision of St. Paul,³⁷ is attractive because

St. Paul speaks about "boasting," that is praising oneself, and is also unable to give an account of the vision. The suggestion appears at first sight singularly appropriate when one remembers that in the Epistle to Can Grande Dante compares his own vision in the *Paradiso* with that of St. Paul, and explains that he, like St. Paul, is unable to relate what he saw because, first, he could not retain it in his memory, and secondly, even if he had been able to retain it, words could not express it.³⁸ The association of memory and tongue in their inability to deal with transcendental matters became a familiar idea with Dante, occurring at least three times in the *Paradiso*,³⁹ and the visions of the *Paradiso*, especially that which crowns them all in the last canto, are naturally comparable to the vision of St. Paul; but in our passage of the *Vita Nuova* there is no hint of any vision, but only, first, the assertion that the matter in question is not in the memory of the author — for reasons which are supposed to be obvious to the reader — and secondly the assertion that the matter in question would, in any case, be partly inexplicable. More readily than the vision of St. Paul or any other vision, there occurs to one's mind the commentary on *Amor che nella mente*, verses 9-13:

E certo e' mi convien lasciare in pria,
s'io vo' *trattar* di quel ch'odo di lei,
ciò che lo mio intelletto non comprende;
e di quel che s'intende
gran parte, perchè dirlo non savrei.⁴⁰

The impropriety of praising oneself was moreover a common rhetorical precept, and does not imply a reminiscence of the words of Paul.⁴¹ The whole hypothesis rests on the assumption that the author is thinking of a vision which is not the "mirabile visione" of V. N. XLII (XLIII), but another that is not otherwise mentioned or even suggested.

Those who shrewdly conjecture that the first and third

reasons are fantastic excuses invented by the poet because he had ready no poem written on the occasion of the death of Beatrice, and that the second reason is the only serious one, may possibly be right,⁴² but we are concerned chiefly with what Dante intends us to understand. We are suddenly told that Beatrice is gone, and we are given no story and no explanation of the event. In harmony with the dramatic suddenness of the totally unexpected announcement, the poet is silent, but he explains his silence by saying that he has no story, he is too shocked and astounded, he has no knowledge of the circumstances of the disaster. On reflection he can understand the reason for her departure, and he is filled with awe at the thought of its significance, but to explain all that would be beyond the powers of any commentary he could write, as it would be beyond his powers to praise her properly in verse, even if he could tell the tale of how she went.⁴³ And even if he could explain the whole matter sufficiently, he could not do so without making a saint of himself, and so he will leave both poem and commentary to another.⁴⁴ Nevertheless ("tuttavia"), since, with regard to other episodes of the *Vita Nuova*, he has noted that the number nine has had some mysterious connexion with the events narrated, so here he can at least affirm that the same mysteriousness accompanied the death of Beatrice, and so he tells us in the next chapter how that friendly number was associated with her departure, and adds the "ragioni" of that phenomenon as well as he can. It is true that this matter also is not a part of his memories, but it may be accepted as a continuation of comment on previous narratives, and so be considered as suitable to the "proposito"; while the two "ragioni" he unfolds are well fitted to confirm the already confessed impossibility of any adequate explanation of the passing of so miraculous a lady. This story of the nines and the comment upon it are the best substitute he can find for the "trattato" which is inevitably missing.⁴⁵

No matter what may be the real facts and motives that lie behind the absence of that "trattato", the three reasons Dante gives are self-sufficient; they stand on their own legs and do not need to be explained away.

NOTES

1, p. 143. — "Lo segnore de la giustizia chiamoe." V.N. xxviii (xxix), l.

2, p. 143. — *GSLit.* II, 370.

3, p. 144. — Cf. Scherillo, ed.

4, p. 144. — This is the solution adopted by De Labusquette, 627.

5, p. 144. — Scherillo understood this: "Le rime e le reminiscenze che ad esse si riferivano."

6, p. 144. — These words have been interpreted by some as meaning that Dante does not intend to transcribe all the poems he had made in his new life of love; cf. *GSLit.* VII, 258, n. 1. But if so, where is the "sentenzia" of the omitted poems, some of which are known to us?

7, p. 145. — Giuliani' ed., D'Ancona ed., Casini ed., consider that the "partita da noi" of Beatrice does not belong properly among the poet's memories of his new life of love, because that life came to an end with her death. Accordingly, as Guerri ed. explains, the last fourteen chapters of the *Vita Nuova* are only "un appendice di pianti alla storia terrena dell' amore." In other words, not only the omitted "trattato" on the death of Beatrice, but all that follows in the *Vita Nuova* is outside of the purpose of the book, "non è del presente proposito." But Guerri becomes ambiguous when he continues, saying: "cioè è ancora quella storia in quanto si protrae nel lutto (e nei vinti contrasti). Cesserà, quando il cuore del poeta sarà tratto da 'intelligenza nuova' tutto su dov'è la sua donna." For my part I cannot believe that Dante, after omitting an account of the death of Beatrice because such an account is not "del presente proposito," would write fourteen more chapters equally inappropriate "se volemo guardare nel proemio che precede questo libello," especially as he apologizes specifically for the twenty-ninth chapter saying: "acciò che pare al proposito convenirsi."

Federzoni (1, 409-416), who repudiates the above explanation, attributes an unusual meaning to the word *incipit* in the rubric "Incipit vita nova." The *Vita Nuova*, according to him, is concerned only with the *beginning* of the new life, the story of which is to be continued in the *Commedia*, and the "partita" of Beatrice belongs to the continuation, not to the beginning. He says (416): "La mia opinione è dunque che Dante non volle trattare o cantare

della partita di Beatrice da noi cioè della sua vita in Paradiso, perchè questo sarebbe stato argomento di ben altra narrazione, il cui concetto egli aveva già, benchè vagamente, nell' intelletto profondo." But the "partita di Beatrice da noi" is not the same as her "vita in Paradiso." If it were, and if it were not a proper part of the subject of the *Vita Nuova*, the canzone *Li occhi dolenti* and the sonnet *Oltre la spera* would not be "del presente proposito"; and there is no reason for supposing that *incipit* in "Incipit vita nova" means any more than it ordinarily means as part of the title of a book or of a section of a book.

8, p. 145. — *BSDIt.* VIII, 265 and XI, 37.

9, p. 145. — Flamini, ed. Cf. also Scherillo 1, 364, Scherillo ed. and Melodia ed., whose explanations are substantially the same.

10, p. 146. — *V.N.* xix, 15.

11, p. 146. — *Conv.* III, 1, 13.

12, p. 147. — *V.N.* xx, 2.

13, p. 147. — *V.N.* xxi, 1.

14, p. 147. — Cf. Toynbee 2, 29-35, e.g. Benvenuto da Imola: "expeditis duobus primis capitulis prohemialibus, in quorum primo Dantes proposuit, in secundo invocavit, nunc consequenter in isto tertio capitulo incipit suam narrationem sive tractatum."

Mr. Toynbee was the first to point out these uses, in his essay: *Dante's uses of the word 'trattato' in the Convivio and Vita Nuova.*

15, p. 147. — Cf., e.g., Flamini ed. and Melodia ed.

16, p. 147. — Cf. *V.N.* xxiii, 15, 29; xxiv, 1, and xxiii, 4.

17, p. 149. — "no la ci tolse qualità di gelo — nè di calore, come l'altre face"... Canz. *Li occhi dolenti*, 18-19.

18, p. 149. — *V.N.* xxiii, 4 and 22.

19, p. 150. — Cf. the commentaries of Melodia, Flamini, McKenzie, and Barbi in *BSDIt.* VIII, 36-37.

20, p. 150. — Zingarelli (374-75) seems to think that all descriptions of the poet's feelings are, strictly speaking, beyond the "proposito", and explains the sentence in chapter x in accordance with that view, although the *Vita Nuova* consists chiefly of descriptions of the author's state of mind on many occasions.

21, p. 151. — *V.N.* xxi, 8.

22, p. 151. — Cf. *Par.* xxx, 25-27: "chè, comesole in viso che più trema, — così lo rimembrar del dolce riso — la mente mia di me medesimo scema."

23, p. 151. — *Par.* xxxiii, 55-57. Cf. *Epist.* xiii (x), 28 and 29 "nescit quia oblitus, nequit quia, si recordatur et contentum tenet, sermo tamen deficit."

24, p. 152. — Cf. *supra*, p. 145.

25, p. 152. — Proto, in *GD.* XIV, 75-76, cites similar expressions by Eusebius, Augustine and Cyril, when they are undertaking to speak of the death of St. Jerome.

26, p. 152. — There can be no doubt as to the meaning of the word. Cf. *chiosa* and *chiosare* in *Conv.* I, ix, 10-11, and IV, xiv, 6; *Inf.* xv, 89; *Purg.* xi, 41, and xx, 99; *Par.* xvii, 94.

27, p. 153. — "...Amore signoreggiò la mia anima, la quale fu sì tosto a lui dispensata..." *V.N.* II (1), 7.

28, p. 153. — "donna de la mia mente" *V.N.* II (1), 1.

29, p. 153. — "tosto fu vostro, e mai non s'è smagato." V.N. xii, 25.

30, p. 154. — It is improbable that either Cino da Pistoia or any other definite person is referred to with the words "altro chiosatore." Cf. *Conv.* I, ii, 13: "poi che altro escusatore non si levava."

31, p. 154. — It ought to be obvious that the canzone *Li occhi dolenti* does not contain any account of the circumstances of her death or of the feelings of the author at the time of her death.

32, p. 155. — Colagrosso makes this simple but conclusive observation in *GSLIt.* XXX, 453-54.

33, p. 156. — V.N. xvi, 1; *Conv.* II, iv (v), 8; II, vi (vii), 2; II, xiv (xv), 16; III, xv, 19; IV, xiii, 12; IV, xiv, 12. Blessed be the makers of concordances, especially Sheldon, White, Rand, and Wilkins!

34, p. 156. — *Conv.* II, iv (v), 8.

35, p. 156. — *Conv.* II, xiv (xv), 16.

36, p. 156. — That is, he would have written: ...*la mia lingua ancora non sarebbe sufficiente ecc.*, or else: *la mia lingua non sarebbe ancora sufficiente*. Curcio (cited in *Melodia* ed. n. 10), and Guerri ed. say that "ancora" means *moreover*, as it does in many passages of Dante. But the only example from Dante containing *ancora* in this sense, with a concessive sentence, is *Conv.* II, i, 13: "Ancora, posto che possibile fosse, sarebbe irrazionale....," where "ancora" is placed before the concessive clause, its natural position when it has that meaning.

37, p. 156. — II. *Corinthians*, 12.

38, p. 157. — Cf. Grandgent in *Ro.* XXXI (1902), 14-27, and Dante, *Epistole* xiii (x), 77-84.

39, p. 157. — *Par.* xxxiii, 55-57: "Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio — che 'l parlar nostro, ch'a tal vista cede, — e cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio." Also *ibid.* 67-75, and *Par.* xxiii, 40-60.

40, p. 157. — Cf. *Conv.* III, iii, 12-15, and III, iv, 1-4, especially 3: "...dico che non pur a quello che lo mio intelletto non sostiene, ma eziandio a quello che io intendo sufficiente [non sono], però che la lingua mia non è di tanta facundia che dire potesse ciò che nel pensiero mio se ne ragiona; per che è da vedere che, a rispetto de la veritate, poco fia quello che dirà."

41, p. 157. — Cf. *Conv.* I, ii, 3-10, and Guido Faba, *Summa dictaminis* publ. by Gaudenzi in *Pro.* N.S. III (1890), i, p. 298: "De propria commendatione tollenda..., cum Scriptura testetur: *Os alienum te commendat, non tuum*, et in alio loco dicat: *Omnis laus in proprio ore sordescit*." See Parodi in *BSDIt.* XXII, 267.

42, p. 158. — e.g., Colagrosso, *GSLIt.* XXX, 454; Grandgent *op. cit.*; Scherillo ed.

43, p. 158. — St. Cyril and St. Augustine were able to relate marvellous visions revealing to them the death of St. Jerome; Eusebius was able to give a detailed account of his death; Dante had no such information to give about the departure of Beatrice. Cf. Proto in *GD.* XIV, 82-89.

44, p. 158. — "lasciò cotale trattato ad altro chiosatore" means: "I leave such a poem and its commentary to another poet

and commentator." The *trattato* is the poem, the *chiosatore* is the author of the comment; "trattato" stands for both poem and commentary, "chiosatore" stands for both poet and commentator. For the use of one member of each of two dualities to represent both dualities, which is Virgilian and Horatian, see Bell, 9-15.

45, p. 158. — The somewhat timid apology for chapter xxix, "acciò che pare al proposito convenirsi," shows us the answer to the natural question: Why is no excuse offered for the twenty-fifth chapter on the use of personifications, which is obviously a digression? Chapter xxv needs no apology because it is evidently a continuation of the comment on the sonnet *Io mi senti' svegliar*, to which it refers, and which describes a vision that is in the memory of the poet, and it is also a comment on the personification of the ballata of chapter xii, but the twenty-ninth chapter is not a commentary on any poem, and consists of reflexions, not recollections.

VII

THE CHARACTER OF THE *VITA NUOVA*

The significance of this work of Dante's depends largely on whether we judge it be an allegory or not. We cannot avoid the discussion of this hackneyed question, but before we approach it we shall do well to ascertain what is known as to the reality and identity of Beatrice, about whom all discussions on the nature of the book necessarily revolve.

There can be no reasonable doubt that Dante's Beatrice was a real woman. The commentary on the *Inferno* by Graziolo dei Bambaglioli, written in 1324, testifies to her existence as a living woman,¹ and so does the "Anonimo Selmi" writing between 1321 and 1337.² The author of the "Ottimo Commento," who was almost certainly the notary Andrea Lancia³ and who says in two places that he knew Dante personally, is a still better witness.⁴ The testimony of Boccaccio and of one version of the commentary of Pietro Alighieri add circumstantial confirmation of the tradition of reality: we shall consider this latter evidence when we raise the question of the lady's identity.

The best and a thoroughly satisfactory witness is Dante himself, for beside the apparently natural and unsuspecting way in which he tells us of the human circumstances of Beatrice — the death of her father, and her behaviour at a house-warming party, for example — a way which is

convincing enough for many readers, he also furnishes us unconsciously with other evidence that is conclusive. The 'serventese' in which Beatrice was ninth among the sixty beauties celebrated was not invented to support a fiction, for its existence is attested by the tenth verse of the sonnet "Guido, i' vorrei," which is not in the *Vita Nuova*, and the shifts to which Dante is put in order to find nines in the date of the death of Beatrice would be inexplicable if it were not the date of the real death of a real woman.⁵

Beatrice, therefore, was a real woman, but was she that Bice, daughter of Folco Portinari and wife of Simone de' Bardi, which the only tradition we have declares her to have been? Dante himself tells us in the sonnet "Io mi senti' svegliar"⁶ — a confidential sonnet addressed to Guido Cavalcanti which was probably not made public until the *Vita Nuova* was composed⁷ — that her real name was "Bice", but the name was not uncommon: it occurs more than once in documents of the time published by Del Lungo⁸, and it was the name of Guido's own wife.

Evidence for the identification is given by the Ashburnham ms. 841, which purports to be a version of the commentary of Pietro Alighieri on the Divine Comedy of his father. Part of the comment on the second canto of the *Inferno* reads as follows:

Et quia modo hic primo de Beatrice fit mentio, de qua tantus est sermo maxime infra in tercio libro paradisi, premittendum est quod revera quedam domina nomine Beatrix, insignis valde moribus et pulchritudine, tempore auctoris vigit in civitate Florentie, nata de domu quorundam civium florentinorum qui dicuntur Portinari, de qua Dantes auctor procus fuit et amator in vita dicte domine, et in eius laudem multas fecit cantilenas; etc.⁹

An examination of the context with which this passage is inextricably connected shows that the latter cannot be an interpolation by another author,¹⁰ but it is not certain

that the version of the commentary contained by this Ashburnham manuscript is by Pietro Alighieri himself. Luigi Rocca, its impartial and accurate illustrator, is reasonably persuaded of that authorship, but it cannot be said that all doubt has been eliminated, for a Barberinian manuscript of the same version, judged by Rocca to be later than the Ashburnham, does not claim Pietro as its author.¹¹ Since, however, a passage of the comment on the words of Ciaccio in *Inferno* vi declares that it is about sixty years since the division of the Guelphs into Whites and Blacks occurred in Pistoia, an event that occurred at least as early as 1295, it is certain that the version in question was composed about 1355, although possibly a little later.¹² Another passage of the comment on *Paradiso* XVI says that it is not long — “a modico tempore citra” — since the city of Florence was divided into “quartieri”, and, since this division occurred in 1343, Rocca argues that the version was composed before 1355 rather than later.

The next earliest witness is Boccaccio, who wrote his life of Dante about 1360,¹³ in which he identified Beatrice as the daughter of Folco Portinari, and said that Dante had first met her at a party in her father's house.¹⁴ Later, in 1373 or a little before,¹⁵ when he wrote his commentary on the *Inferno*, he added the information: “e fu moglie d'un cavaliere de' Bardi, chiamato messer Simone.”¹⁶ It is possible that Boccaccio knew the Ash.-Barb. version of the commentary of Pietro Alighieri, for his words: “E perciò ch'è questa è la primera volta che di questa donna nel presente libro si fa menzione” remind one of those of the Ashburnham manuscript: “Et quia modo hic primo de Beatrice fit mentio,”¹⁷ but he was at all events independent of the latter commentary, which says nothing about the husband of Beatrice. Boccaccio's authority was, he says, a “fededegna persona, la quale la conobbe, e fu per consanguinità strettissima a lei”: a near relative of hers, perhaps the same person to whom he refers in his life of Dante,

have been the husband of Beatrice was the son of Geri de' Bardi, information which was not derived either from the commentary of Pietro di Dante or from Boccaccio. This then, as far as we can tell, is a third piece of testimony, independent of the other two.²⁰ It is impossible to say how old it is. The manuscript was said by De Batines to belong to the 15th century, but Rocca seems to think it older.²¹ The translation itself was made as early as 1334, since it is used by the *Ottimo Commento*.²² The passage in question was not noticed until 1890, some months after Del Lungo, searching the papers of the Bardi family contemporary with Dante, had already published his conclusion that the husband of Beatrice was Simone di Geri de' Bardi.²³

We have, therefore, three independent witnesses that Dante's Beatrice was Bice Portinari, two of which belong to the half-century after the death of Dante, and the third to a possibly later period: there is no contradictory testimony.²⁴ The arguments against the identification are suspicions based on the silence of the earliest commentators and biographers. That silence, however, is easily explained and should have been expected.

The earliest commentators were absorbed in the immense and difficult task of expounding the *Comedia*, and it never seems to have occurred to them that facts about the author, his private affairs and his other works would be either appropriate to relate or interesting to their readers. The two sons of Dante presumably knew much about their father, but they say almost nothing about him. Jacopo gives no evidence that he knows any of the minor works; Pietro knows the *Convivio* and uses it, but does not mention it, nor does he mention the *Vita Nuova*. Both Jacopo and Pietro were bent on making accessible to the unlearned the repertory of knowledge that is in the greater work. They explain the system and contents of it; they expound the allegory, neglecting the literal sense; they dilate on the

moral and theological doctrine. Graziolo the chancellor of Bologna pays more attention to the literal sense, but he too has the same view of his task as Jacopo and Pietro. He says nothing of importance about Dante, he never mentions the *Vita Nuova*. The *Anonimo Selmi* is similarly silent. Jacopo della Lana and Ser Andrea Lancia, however, are commentators of a different sort. The former, when he is not dealing with philosophical and theological doctrine, gives free rein to his taste for narrative illustrating the historical and mythological references, but his accounts become scanty as they approach the time of the author, and about Dante he gives us only three or four small and scattered items of information. He has nothing to say about the other works. The author of the "Ottimo Commento" is the only one of all these commentators who might be expected to tell us who Beatrice was. The others would not have told us even if they knew, but the "Ottimo" attaches more importance to the literal sense than do the others, and he is led by his knowledge of the *Convivio*, the lyric poems, and the *Vita Nuova* to tell us that, in the literal sense, Beatrice is to be recognized as a woman who had once been alive and loved by the poet. It must be admitted, I think, that Andrea Lancia did not know who Beatrice was, and he was probably not sufficiently interested to find out. If he had known the *Vita Nuova* well he might have been moved to investigate and make some report as to her identity, but how imperfect his knowledge of both the *Vita Nuova* and the *Convivio* was is shown by his saying that in "Voi che intendendo" Beatrice is a symbol for Philosophy, thus confusing her with the Donna Gentile.²⁵

Our own curiosity about Dante's lady would be greatly diminished if we knew no other work of his than the *Commedia*, and nothing less than an intimate acquaintance with the *Vita Nuova* could have aroused the interest of these mediaeval moralists and scholars in

the identity of Dante's Beatrice, devoted as they were to philosophy, theology, ancient history and mythology, and the Latin language, but the *Vita Nuova* was a neglected book, and remained so even after Boccaccio.²⁶ Even Benvenuto da Imola is much more concerned with the allegorical Beatrice than with the literal, and Leonardo Bruni expresses the learned prejudice against sexual sorrows and feminine trifles when he rebukes his predecessor for writing so much about "love and sighs and scalding tears."²⁷ Boccaccio himself, who had not scrupled to dwell on Dante's love and sighs in the *Trattatello*, shows that he has some qualms about the propriety of speaking of human loves when he is expounding a great work like the *Commedia*. He apologizes for mentioning Bice: "E perciò ch'è questa è la primiera volta che di questa donna nel presente libro si fa menzione, non pare indegna cosa alquanto manifestare di cui l'autore, in alcune parti della presente opera, intenda nominando lei, conciosiacosachè non sempre di lei allegoricamente favelli."²⁸

Even in the *Trattatello* one sees the orthodox prejudice of the mature and learned humanists taking hold of the pen of the author: "E comechè egli d'avere questo libretto fatto [the *Vita Nuova*] negli anni più maturi si vergognasse molto, nondimeno, considerata la sua età, è egli assai bello e piacevole, e massimamente a' volgari."²⁹ Realizing, probably, that this sentence was untrue to Dante, the biographer expunged it from his shorter lives; perhaps too because he realised that it was untrue to himself.

For the deprecating sentences about Bice and the *Vita Nuova* in the *Commento* and the *Trattatello* do not represent the real Boccaccio, or represent him only slightly. The real Boccaccio was the author of the *Fiammella*, the man who truly valued the aesthetic side of the sexual relation. This was the scholar who had carefully copied out the whole of the *Vita Nuova* with his own hand at least twice,³⁰ who had been from his early youth an ardent

worshipper of Dante,³¹ and who was the first "dantista", that is the first scholar to whom everything about Dante — his life and loves as well as the recondite significance of one of his works — had an irresistible fascination.

When Boccaccio came home to Florence from Naples in 1340,³² beside his own father, who was an honoured member of the firm of the Bardi and not a mere agent,³³ there were living numerous descendants of the Portinari and Bardi, and among the former were a nephew and a niece of Bice: Accirito son of Manetto Portinari, and Simona di Pigello Portinari, who had also married a knight of the Bardi family.³⁴ And the mother of Boccaccio's own step-mother, who was living in his father's house at the time, was a second cousin of Bice and her contemporary.³⁵ No one has ever supposed that Giovanni did not make enquiries about Dante and Beatrice: it would be incredible even if he himself had not spoken of his trusted informants and if the *Trattatello* were not full of information about the life and character of the poet; information which Boccaccio was the first to record in writing, and which nevertheless, unlike his account of Bice, remains substantially unchallenged. As far as we know, his enquiries elicited only one story about Bice, — no one is known to have heard any other, — the story that she was the daughter of Folco Portinari, who married Messer Simone de' Bardi.

It has been suggested that the tradition received by Boccaccio had grown up among the Portinari, who had been struck by the coincidences in the events of the life of their Bice with the information given by Dante about his heroine, and who were flattered by the idea of identifying the two. De Labusquette says: "Par une vanité bien excusable, quelque Portinari, frappé des coïncidences qu'offraient la vie de sa parente et celle de la Bice dantesque, s'imagina de bonne foi qu'elles ne faisaient qu'un: et, après tout, il devina peut-être la vérité." ³⁶

This conjecture is not impossible, but if we entertain it we should also remember that the Bardi must be included among those who were glad to believe in the tradition: that those "coincidences" which may have persuaded them are striking in themselves and are impressive to us too; that a tradition preserved by Portinari and Bardi nineteen years after the death of Dante, and uncontradicted by any other, is more than respectable. It would have been quite reasonable to conclude: " il devina *probablement* (instead of " peut-être ") la vérité. "

However, Boccaccio was not dependent for his information on the Portinari and Bardi. The population of Florence in Dante's time was not large, almost all the inhabitants would be known to each other at least by sight, while persons of distinction would be well-known to all. There must have been many women named Bice, but among the ladies of distinguished family — the only kind that could be celebrated in courtly verse by a poet — the number of those who had that name must have been small. The knowledge that Dante's lady was a Bice would be a very satisfactory guide for identifying her, to anyone who knew the history of the noble or wealthy families, even after a generation had gone by. But Boccaccio, beside knowing her Christian name, knew also from the *Vita Nuova* that she was married while Dante was still young,³⁷ that she died in 1290, that her father was famous for his piety, and that he died between 1283 and 1290: it would be strange if the ardent young "dantista" had not been able to discover who she was.

He announced his discovery again in 1373 when he lectured on the *Inferno* to a large and not uncritical public audience. Of the two hundred and five members of the council that appointed him to the lectureship, nineteen had opposed the appointment,³⁸ and if we are to accept as authentic the polemical sonnets attributed to Boccaccio on the evidence of the manuscripts, there was bitter

criticism of the purpose of these popularly educative lectures,³⁹ but it does not appear that the lecturer's facts or interpretations were challenged.

What then ought we to conclude as to the identity of Dante's Beatrice? Our conclusion ought to be that it is not certain that she was Bice Portinari nei Bardi, but that it is as nearly certain as any tradition can be that is not actually proved to be true: there is no reason for doubting it.⁴⁰

A steadily growing disposition to acknowledge the reality of Beatrice, which ought never to have been doubted, together with the discovery of the sentence in the Ashburnham manuscript which made her identity with Bice Portinari more probable, destroyed the peculiarity of the position occupied by Bartoli⁴¹ and his followers — the so-called "idealists" — who held that Beatrice is a symbol of feminine perfection. For the realist admits that Beatrice is highly idealized in the *Vita Nuova*, and that she is represented to be the perfection of her sex, and although he insists that she is a woman who was really loved by the author, he is willing to admit that the events in the story have been transformed by the author's imagination, and sometimes he will admit that alterations have been consciously made.

The recognition of the reality of Beatrice, — largely due to the investigations of Del-Lungo — has also done much to discredit the classical allegorists of the nineteenth century — Rossetti, Centofanti, Aroux, Pérez, Termini-Trigona, Gietmann, Meda and Earle — not because that reality was entirely incompatible with their theories, but because they so persistently assailed it. Even those of them who admit that Dante may have had an affection for some woman whom he chose to call "Beatrice" insist that that possibility can have no bearing on the significance of the Beatrice of the *Vita Nuova*, who is purely a creation of the author's mind.⁴² Following the lead of

Biscioni in the previous century,⁴³ they wasted so much heavy ammunition on the "myth" of Bice Portinari that they inevitably created the impression that their allegorical constructions stood or fell with their success in silencing the voice of Boccaccio. Some of them, too, undertook the dangerous task of attempting a detailed interpretation of episodes of the *Vita Nuova* according to the theory they were defending, and presented explanations which were obviously improbable.⁴⁴

Others, however, — Pérez, Meda and to some extent Earle, — were content to expound the symbolical meaning of the figure of Beatrice, with the help of the *Commedia*, and sketch an allegory of a general kind to be applied to the *Vita Nuova* in harmony with that meaning. They were willing to admit that much of the narrative could be understood only in a literal sense, but that sense they considered fictitious.⁴⁵

Renier adopted the same attitude in his famous article in the *Giornale Storico* in which he reviewed the editions of D'Ancona, Giuliani, and Luciani, although three years before, in his *La Vita Nuova e la Fiammetta*, he had held that Beatrice does not become an allegorical symbol (of Theology) until after the appearance of the Donna Gentile (Philosophy).⁴⁶

Of course the recognition of the reality of Beatrice does not exclude the possibility that the *Vita Nuova* may be an allegory, and already in 1826 Trivulzio had advanced the theory that the story is historically true, at least in part, and that the allegory is based upon it. Renier added the view that the allegory is not complete or continuous, but that it proceeds in leaps, with intervening spaces which are not allegorical: "è una allegoria vaga, incoerente, che fa capolino qua e colà e poi vanisce come nebbia..."⁴⁷

The modern allegorists are almost unanimous in representing the *Vita Nuova* as an allegory based upon a literal sense which may or may not be, in large or small part, his-

torically true. They concentrate upon the symbolical significance of Beatrice, and explain the rest of the allegory only here and there: they feel under no obligation to explain as allegorical those parts of the book that do not lend themselves to such an interpretation.⁴⁸ They hold, nevertheless, that there is a general allegory which pervades the book and is connected with the symbolic Beatrice, and they labour to distinguish this general allegory from the literal meaning.

Considering that the *Vita Nuova* itself contains no obvious indication that it is to be taken as an allegory, it seems reasonable to enquire what the motives are that have persuaded scholars to understand the book in this way. Their reasons are as follows, and are the same both for the earlier and the later allegorists:

1. The Beatrice of the *Commedia* is obviously symbolical, and she is the same person as the Beatrice of the *Vita Nuova*.
2. The Donna Gentile of the *Convivio* is explained by Dante as a symbol of Philosophy, and he tells us that she is the Donna Gentile he wrote of in the *Vita Nuova*.
3. Dante's statement about allegory in *Conv.* II, i.
4. The miraculous qualities of Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova*, and the unworldly character of the whole story.
5. Obscurities and "incredibilia" in the literal narrative.

Because of doubt as to the dates of composition of the *Vita Nuova* it has been possible — especially in the time of the earliest allegorists — to think of it as having been written about the same time as Books II and III of the *Convivio* and the first part of the *Inferno*. It is perhaps not unnatural, therefore, that the three works should have been expected to exhibit similar ideas and reflect the same stage in the education of the author. We have seen for ourselves, however, that all the available evidence points to the conclusion that the *Vita Nuova* was finished within

the year 1292, a conclusion which is that of many Dante scholars. There is therefore a wide gap between the composition of the earlier work and that of the *Convivio*, and an enormous gap between the *Vita Nuova* and the bulk of the *Commedia*. Both of the later works belong to the period of exile, and between them and the youthful "libello" stretch long years of study, which were also filled with experiences such as would inevitably remould the mind of the author. It is reasonable, of course, to scrutinize eagerly any passages in the later works which offer information as to facts connected with Dante's youth and early writings; it is also reasonable to seek in those later works the development of ideas which are rudimentary in the *Vita Nuova*; but it is not reasonable to assume that an idea is present in the latter because it is to be found in the *Commedia* or the *Convivio*. The facts that Beatrice in the former work and the *Donna Gentile* in the latter have become allegorical figures do not in any way make it probable that these ladies may be symbols in the *Vita Nuova*. As for the *Donna Gentile*, we have seen that, unless we are to suppose that *Vita Nuova* and *Convivio* contradict one another, — an impossible supposition in view of the unconsciousness of the author as to any such contradiction, — she is a real woman in the former and both real and symbolical in the latter.

Neglect of the times when the different works were composed, together with the surviving influence of the old-fashioned theory of the "trilogy", according to which all three were parts of a unity in the mind of the author, caused otherwise circumspect scholars to read into the *Vita Nuova* ideas of the *Convivio* and the *Commedia* without even feeling obliged to defend their conduct in this matter. To attribute to the author of the book which he himself describes as "*fervida e passionata*" compared with the "*virile and temperate*" *Convivio* the learning and philosophic depth evidenced by the other works, is an enormity

which does not trouble some modern writers any more than it did their predecessors.⁴⁹

One of the results of this method of exposition was that Dante's explanation in *Conv.* II, 1, of the nature of allegory and its relation to the literal sense of "le scritture" was supposed to be illustrated in the *Vita Nuova*, whereas it is more than probable that when he was writing the latter work he had no well defined ideas on the subject. Chistoni believes that Dante knew nothing about the use of allegory until he was able to study a commentary on Boethius' *Consolation*,⁵⁰ but the poet would, even before that, be at least acquainted with the allegorical exposition of the holy scriptures, which are frequently used with evident familiarity in the *Vita Nuova*. For the present it is sufficient for us to note that Dante's opinions about allegory expressed in the *Convivio* do not contribute anything toward proving that the *Vita Nuova* is an allegory.

On the other hand Dante's account in *Conv.* II, XII (XIII) of how he was introduced into the study of Philosophy is an historical document that cannot be disregarded. It was not until after the death of Beatrice that he began to be interested in that kind of study, and it was not until he had read the *Consolation* and the Laelius that his interest in it became absorbing. He found these books difficult to understand at first, partly because his knowledge of Latin was not perfect,⁵¹ although he could read and write it and had written a composition in Latin only a year before.⁵² Probably, as Chistoni believes, he was reading the texts with accompanying commentaries which were difficult. Nevertheless he was intelligent enough to be able to understand many philosophical ideas, "as appears in the *Vita Nuova*," although he perceived them somewhat vaguely, "like one in a dream."⁵³ He means, I think, those elementary philosophical notions which are mentioned in the *Vita Nuova*, sometimes rather ostentatiously: notions with which every young man of some education must have been

acquainted: the vegetative, sensitive, and rational parts of the soul; the concepts "matter" and "form", "essence" and "quality", "potentiality" and "actuality", "substance" and "accident"; Aristotle's "causes"; the dispute between "nominalists" and "realists".

It would be a mistake to represent Dante as an ignoramus at the age of twenty-six, but it would also be a mistake to think of him as a learned man. The knowledge assimilated at school — Latin grammar, reading, and writing; the elements of logic, mathematics, and astronomy; and especially religion and morality, the Bible and legends of saints — all this would be supplemented by reading any books that he could get hold of. There can be no doubt that if he had had the opportunity to read the *Aeneid* or Horace's *Art of Poetry* or the books of Ovid and Lucan that he mentions in *V. N.* xxv, he would have read them, but, as Chistoni points out, the citations in that chapter have all the appearance of being copied out of a manual of rhetoric,⁵⁴ and the explanation that Juno was "*una dea nemica de li Troiani*" seems too simple for a scholar who is thought by some, on very slight grounds, to have already studied at Bologna.⁵⁵ Books were uncommon and hard to come by, and manuals and "*summae*" were far more accessible than whole texts of authors:⁵⁶ nevertheless it is not by any means impossible that Dante may have obtained and read some works of Latin authors. We know that he taught himself to write verse in Italian, which implies much reading of the verse of others, even if there were not indication of such reading in the *Vita Nuova*; there is plenty of evidence, too, that he was acquainted with Provençal verse, even if, as Santangelo thinks, that acquaintance was slight;⁵⁷ Salvadori has shown how thoroughly saturated his mind was with Franciscan legends and the visions contained in them.⁵⁸ On leaving school, before he was eighteen, he had come into contact with the most care-free and pleasure loving society in Italy — the

years between 1283 and 1289 were the brightest of the century in the history of Florence⁶⁰ — and the contrast between the religious atmosphere which he had been breathing and the gay air of a city devoted to arts and crafts and the fashionable worship of sexual love, had begun that amalgamation in his mind of two sets of ideas which had already produced the best poetry of Guido Guinizelli.⁶⁰

In this situation it is unlikely that, during these years, he devoted himself to the study of Latin literature, and we have his own testimony that he did not study philosophy.⁶¹

Perhaps those who have interpreted the *Vita Nuova* by means of the *Commedia* would have felt less free to do so if they had not taken for granted that, at the time when the earlier work was being composed, the author already had the later work in mind. There is no evidence to support this assumption, although it has bulked large in the tradition about the *Vita Nuova*, which has been handed on from commentator to commentator. It depends chiefly on the last chapter in which the “mirabile visione” is recorded and where it is said that this vision caused the poet to determine to write no more verse about Beatrice — “non dire più di questa benedetta” — until he could write more worthily of her. It depends also on the supposed prophecy of the composition of the *Inferno* in the canzone *Donne che avete*, on the prophecy of the death of Beatrice in the first sonnet, and on the vision of her death and ascent to heaven in the canzone *Donna Pietosa*.

It has seemed to many, and not only to those who interpret the *Vita Nuova* as an allegory, that throughout the book there is a foreboding of the death of Beatrice and a prevision of her apotheosis which point to the *Commedia* as a conception floating in the mind of Dante, if not during the experiences narrated, at any rate when he was writing the prose.⁶² But the author does not attribute this foreboding to his hero — Dante the protagonist of the *Vita Nuova* — either in the commentary on the first sonnet or

in that on *Donna pietosa*, where the dream described is that of a diseased mind, and the thought of death is induced by the precarious condition of the dreamer. On the contrary the death of Beatrice comes to him as a complete and stunning surprise and, as we have seen, the supposed reference to the *Inferno* in *Donne che avete* is an illusion. On the other hand, when Dante was composing the "libello," Beatrice was dead and in heaven, and it is very probable that he then considered the vision of *Donna pietosa* to have been prophetic, as he certainly did the vision of the first sonnet. But although he had had the "forte immaginazione," described in *V. N.* xxxix (xl), and was already communing ecstatically with Beatrice in heaven, it was not either that "immaginazione" or the ecstasy of *Oltre la spera* that decided him to prepare to write more worthily of her. It was the "mirabile visione" of *Vita Nuova* xl (xli) that was the decisive event. This "mirabile visione" he does not at all describe, and to see in it the *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* or *Paradiso*, or parts of them, is mere guessing. As far as we can tell it may have had nothing in common with any part of the *Commedia*. As for the *Paradiso*, the long lapse of years before it was composed makes it most improbable that it anywhere reproduces the "mirabile visione"; as to the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*, the facts that in the one Beatrice figures only indirectly, by reported speech, at the beginning, and in the other does not appear until the end, are fair evidence, even if not proof, that these *cantiche* were not planned at the time when the author's mind was dwelling on the vision mentioned last in the *Vita Nuova*. More significant still is the fact that, whatever Dante's plan was, it was abandoned or indefinitely postponed in a little more than a year's time.

The kinship between the *Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia* is of course evident: they are children of the same father, but the greater work is not the elder child. The immature mysticism of the *Vita Nuova*, cherishing its miracle of

human love, produced in the end the mature mystical theology of the *Commedia*, but not until the learning exemplified in the *Convivio* and the bitter experience of life in exile had formed and developed that miracle of love. It is the resemblance between the mysticism of the *Commedia* and that of the *Vita Nuova* that has caused people to think that the idea of the former is responsible for the latter. It caused no less a person than Vossler to write: "Wer die V. N. komponierte, der musste schon mehr oder weniger klar die D. C. in Sinne haben..."⁶³ This sentence, which is the first part of a longer one full of true insight, is only a reflection of the less startling fact that he who wrote the *Commedia* had the *Vita Nuova* in mind. He had it in mind particularly because he had wearied of demonstrating his intellectual accomplishments to the hostile world, and was turning affectionately to the reminiscences of his early experience of that love which had now appeared to him as the substantial truth in the universe.

The theories of allegory in the *Vita Nuova* depend upon the *Commedia*, and upon the Philosophy and Theology of Dante expounded in that and his other works. The chief charge in the indictment against all these theories is that, if any of them are correct, no reader of the *Vita Nuova*, at the time when it was written, could have understood what they say is its "true meaning."⁶⁴⁻⁶⁵

The unworldly character of the story, the scarcity of concrete details, and the fact that it is an account of mental rather than physical experiences, should never have been mistaken for evidence that it is an allegory, for the invariable practice of authors who have constructed allegories has been to make the literal sense a narrative of physical experience in which all appropriate details are included, witness the Romance of the Rose and the Divine Comedy. The mystical characteristics have been commandeered to support the belief in allegory because they seemed, perhaps more reasonably, to be evidence against

the historical truth of the narrative. The miraculous qualities attributed to Beatrice are an important part of the unworldly character of the book, but they have abundant precedents in the Provençal and the early Italian lyric. Even the religious atmosphere which surrounds and transfigures her, and which is so intense that it strikes one as peculiarly Dantesque, is not without precedent and parallel. It is obvious in some of the poems of Chiaro Davanzati and Guinizelli, it continues with Cino da Pistoia and others. The later Provençal poetry is religious too, and perhaps the only reason why the "donna angelicata" is so much more impressive in Italian literature is that poets of a like calibre were lacking in Provence, for lyric poetry in both countries followed the same line of development, and the two streams were but branches of the same river.

The "Power of Dante" as Mr. Grandgent calls it, makes all the difference. Whereas in the Provençal and in the early Italian poets we are inclined to pass over the miraculous attributes of the lady as merely conventional, it is impossible to do so in the case of Beatrice. When we read the eleventh chapter of the *Vita Nuova*, the description of the effect upon Dante of her salutation, we are forced to confess that the poet is not merely using conventional language. Those who refuse to believe that the experience described could be produced by the approach and greeting of an earthly woman, no matter how beloved or worshipped she might be, have to accept one of two positions. They either say it is all allegory, and the feelings of the poet are caused by communication with some abstract idea such as "sapienza", or else, like Cesareo, they say it is only fiction of an admirably successful kind. But to say that the chapter is allegorical means nothing except that Beatrice is a symbol, for the experiences described are not altered by being called allegorical. That they are to be understood literally is certain, for we know that Beatrice is a real woman, but where is the allegorical

sense that would not be the same as the literal? If the experiences in question were those of an ordinary lover it might be argued that in the allegorical sense they were different, — less worldly and more ecstatic, — but they are as unworldly and ecstatic as possible already in the literal sense, and cannot be altered in that respect. Nor is it admissible to reply that everything in an allegory need not be allegorical, for the greater part of the *Vita Nuova* is an account of emotional effects similar to these, and so the greater part of the book would not be allegorical. When all is said and done the modern allegorists have no consistent allegorical explanation to offer for the *Vita Nuova*: they only repeat that Beatrice must be a symbol of this or that abstract idea, or of a whole set of more or less cognate abstracts.

They agree with Cesareo and other sceptics that the literal sense is often incredible, and at the same time they attribute the convincing realism of the story to the consummate art of the author, so that that art is, according to them, both marvellous and inefficient. But the power of Dante does not consist merely in his imagination: it would be reasonable to surmise even from *prima facie* evidence that he is able to persuade chiefly because he has really had the unusual experiences he relates. So Guinizelli's "Al cor gentil" is impressive because we cannot help believing that the author feels himself capable of a better love than that felt by others. Dante's story is extraordinary but not incredible.

We need not suppose that all the incidents of the *Vita Nuova* occurred exactly as they are related, but it is probable that, at the time when the book was composed, they appeared to the author to have occurred, for the most part, in that way, fraught with the meaning which his aftersight attributes to them. An important peculiarity of the *Vita Nuova* is that there is a continuous progress in the religious idealization of Beatrice, and in the hero's

consciousness of it. Overwhelming as the influence of the lady upon the hero is from the beginning, it is at first quite vague, quite unintelligible to him; but it becomes by stages more intelligible and before the end of the book he is represented as having understood it, as able to reconcile the miraculous with the other phenomena of his experience. If this itinerary of the hero's consciousness is the subject of the narrative; if the story of growth in his new life of love is what the author is copying from the book of his memory, then it is quite natural that the many circumstantial incidents which had no part in that growth should be omitted, and that the few incidents which played a part in it should be presented only in relation to that growth and not as if they had an importance of their own. To narrate incidents unrelated to the subject, to name places and persons and describe circumstances in detail, would have been to mislead the reader and to destroy the mystical impression which the story as we have it gives us. This mystical impression is self-explanatory, and, having a sufficient reason, is no argument for allegory or scepticism.

Apart from the unworldly character of the narrative, the enamourment of the hero at the age of nine, the account of the 'ladies of the defence', the recurrence of the number nine in the dating of many of the events, have been treated as incredible, as well as other incidents.

That a boy of nine should fall ecstatically in love will always seem impossible to those who cannot imagine it, and with them argument is superfluous, nor will they be persuaded even by the citation of historically authentic examples.⁶⁶ Those, however, whose imagination presents the matter as not impossible may be asked to consider that a love of the particular kind in question is more likely to have its beginnings before the age of fourteen than after. A little boy who, like Dante, may have passed his first years without any intimate acquaintance with girls, and

who is, in his innocence, ignorant of the physiological nature of the attraction of sex, may be astonishingly affected by the apparition of a graceful and otherwise charming little girl, who is likely to seem to him an inexplicably dazzling creature. A powerful impression made at such an early age may be preserved and develop in after years, especially if the two never come to know one another well and if the little girl grows to be a gracious young lady, whom the young man is able to see every now and then without ever conversing with her. On the other hand, an infatuation begun after the age of puberty is likely to be soon forgotten for others of the same kind. And when the Beatrice of seventeen, recently married to one of the wealthiest noblemen of the city, beautiful and radiant with the prospects of a happy life, greeted the young man who, as a child, and before he was sent to school, had been a neighbour of hers, — greeted him with the friendliness of an old acquaintance, — she confirmed the impression she had made as a little child, by substituting for it another fully in harmony with it.

That Dante should, after this event, have been content with being spoken to by her, whenever they met, has also seemed incredible, but only to those who, although amazed at the precociousness of the young lover, still insist on thinking of this as the story of an ordinary love affair. Before the first greeting Beatrice had been the lady of his mind and of his dreams, and the kindly greeting, repeated more than once, heightened the glamour of that peculiar relation to him. If he had had the courage to approach her the spell would have been broken, the peculiarity of the charm would have been obliterated by commonplace conversation. The importance of the lady's salutation was one of the traditional conventions,⁶⁷ but it was a convention that was founded on real human experience. The poets were, as a rule, inferior socially to the ladies whom they courted. Let anyone who can, remember

the time when he was a presentable and ambitious young man but with no conspicuous social position; let him remember being greeted in public cordially, as an old acquaintance, by a beautiful, wealthy young lady of the highest rank; let him remember how the warm blood rushed through his happy body, flattering the elemental snob that is in every man, fortifying his self-respect and glorifying the gracious person who affected him so "virtuously"; and he will have no difficulty in understanding why the salutation of the lady became important. With Dante, however, the pardonable element of flattery must have been less effective than the realization that this adorable person was the same who, as a little child, had so affected his imagination that he had thought of her as an angel and had often sought occasion to look at her and wonder. She was more glorious now than ever, and she was kind to him.

The impressions made upon Dante by his first meeting with Beatrice and by her greeting him nine years later ought not to seem incredible in themselves, but if we also consider that the *Vita Nuova* was composed after her death, after Dante's temporary unfaithfulness to her memory, after the "forte imaginazione" recorded in chapter thirty-nine, and immediately after the "mirabile visione" mentioned in the last chapter, all reason for doubting the sincerity of the literal account vanishes. For he evidently composed the *Vita Nuova* under the influence of a flood of recollections which became transfigured in his memory by the new light in which he was reviewing his young life. In this new light all the incidents recollected assumed a predestined continuity, and a consequently heightened significance. He believed that he had been miraculously guided, and that Beatrice had been the guide providentially ordained for him. He had never been well acquainted with her, so that no conflicting material circumstances hampered his imagination as it transfigured her. The wondering admiration with which he remem-

bered looking upon her as a child, the happiness of being greeted by her when she smiled upon him later, were memories that transcended the reality of the events.

The new light in which he is seeing the incidents he remembers envelops all of them and transforms them without altering them substantially. Let us face the difficulty of the "ladies of the defence," which, I think, constitutes the most reasonable of the objections to the credibility of the story. Dante tells us that, inspired by Love, he twice selected a lady to be the ostensible object of his affection, in order to conceal his love for Beatrice; but we cannot help believing that these ostensible affections were real love affairs which had a value of their own for him. Why do we believe that? Because we are told that the courting of the first lady lasted for "years and months" and we are allowed to read a poem which seems to be a very genuine lamentation over her departure. As for the second lady, Love is represented to us as actually carrying the heart of the poet away from the first lady, who had possessed it, to present it to the second, and we are told that the courting of this second lady was so ardent that Beatrice herself was shocked by it. In other words it is Dante himself who gives us the information which produces the belief in question. It is not that he is vainly trying to conceal the facts: no one can suppose him to be as clumsy an artist as that. He is conveying to us the meaning which the events had for him at the time in question as well as the meaning they have for him at the time of writing, but he is especially concerned that we shall see these events as he is seeing them now.

His first acquaintance with love had been that which a child may have who is endowed with a vivid imagination and a religious up-bringing. It was transformed, after his meeting with Beatrice at the age of eighteen, into a passion more suitable to his age, partly sensuous, although

unconsciously so. The fascination of the glorious creature of his mind was accompanied by a yearning for something unknown, a longing which could not be satisfied, both because its object was inaccessible and because the nature of the satisfaction longed for was not apparent. It affected his health and so aroused curiosity in his friends. He would have been anxious to defeat that curiosity even if there had been no convention of secrecy, because his emotion was too chaste and precious to be revealed, and because of natural timidity: he was aware that his was not an ordinary love such as was fashionable. He wrote no poetry about it, except the first enigmatic sonnet which won him the sympathy of a more experienced poet, — considered excentric by the rest, — who smiled understandingly and foresaw the tumultuous awakening of the senses, which was sure to bring trouble to this very young and delicate-minded lover.⁶⁸

The lady "of the defence," who appealed directly to his innocent senses,⁶⁹ provided his vague longings with an accessible object, and gave him the opportunity to indulge in an ordinary, fashionable love. He became a "regular" lover such as could be understood by those about him. The satisfaction he must have felt on thus becoming "a man of the world" will be realized by all those who have suffered from being considered "odd", from not being "in the swim" with the young men who are their natural companions. His health was restored, he became happy,⁷⁰ but although his ideal passion for "the lady of his mind" must, I think, have become less ardent, it was revived from time to time by his meetings with Beatrice, when he would give himself up completely to his earlier dreams, the dreams which could not be realized by the lady he was actually courting. He must have missed the latter when she left the city, but his affection for her was not such that no substitute for it could be found. The next lady 'of the defence' was courted with a boldness born of successful

experience, and we know the result: the smiling salutation of Beatrice, which had hitherto satisfied the cravings of his better self, was withdrawn, and with it went all the delightful fancies he had cherished as his most precious possession, his mental life of love, which made him superior to others. Before this time he had had no clear understanding of the nature of love, he had only known that there were different kinds, and that the superior kind was beyond the reach of most: he now began to realize that the love he had lost was the only real kind for him, and that the satisfactions he had so easily grasped were mere imitations of it.

Now that he is writing the *Vita Nuova* he sees that, in these as in all matters, he was guided by a higher power. The other affections were necessary stages of experience: without them he might never have reached his understanding of noble love, which, after the withdrawal of the salutation, appeared to him in an entirely new form. His saying that "Amore" prompted him to assume those disguises of his chief interest is only a figurative way of saying that his amorous inclinations, unstudied hitherto, were operating in a predestined direction. That these love-affairs were really disguises of his best love is no doubt true, but his saying that he embraced them for that purpose is only partly true, and is due, no doubt, to his desire to adopt the Provençal conventions of secrecy and the "stalking horse." In the same way he had adopted the other convention of the importance of the lady's salutation although that importance was far from being merely conventional in his case. By adopting these conventions he was able to give an orthodox, traditional colouring, acceptable to his readers, to the otherwise unusual circumstances he was recording.

The recurrence of the number nine in the dates of events with which Beatrice is concerned is neither incredible nor astonishing. That any number should recur frequently in

the dates of anyone's life is a coincidence which has often been noticed, but the nines of Beatrice, which are never mentioned in the verse, are for the most part purposely excogitated by the author, and that without any concealment. Free as he was to use the year, month, day, and hour of any event, it was not difficult for him to find another nine when he was determined to do so. We may smile at his earnestness in discovering these nines, but his motive is obvious enough. The mystical prestige of nine and its square root three was traditional and a matter of common knowledge.⁷¹ However their significance might be interpreted, their association with a series of incidents emphasized the providential character of those incidents, and Dante was already convinced that the events to which he attaches the number nine were really providentially predestined. It did not matter much to him what particular significance might be found in the recurrence of the number, as is shown by his own deprecatory interpretation in chapter twenty-nine,⁷² but he desired that recurrence to reflect his own impression that the events were not accidental, and that Beatrice was a miraculous creature.⁷³

It would not be fair to ignore the fact that evidence of the allegorical character of the *Vita Nuova* has been apparent to some in the twenty-fifth chapter. It has been thought that the right of a poet to use the figure of personification is too obvious to justify an elaborate defence of that right, and that Dante is really conveying, in a guarded manner, the information that he is using allegory.⁷⁴ It is also argued that, where he says (*V. N.* xxv, 10) "grande vergogna sarebbe a colui che rimasse sotto vesta di figura o di colore rettorico, e poscia, domandato, non sapesse denudare le sue parole da cotale vesta, in guisa che avessero verace intendimento," he is speaking of something more than mere figurative, metaphorical language, especially since in the *Convivio* the "verace

intendimento" is declared to be the allegorical meaning of the poems expounded there.⁷⁵ It is contended, too, that the examples cited from Virgil, Lucan, Horace and Ovid are taken from authors of "scrittura" which, according to *Conv.* I, 1, 2, are to be explained as allegorical, and that therefore their use in *V. N.* xxv implies that allegory is being discussed although it is not mentioned.⁷⁶

Let us not fall into the common error of taking for granted in the *Vita Nuova* the theories and opinions set forth in the *Convivio*. Here in *V. N.* xxv, the examples referred to are all specific examples of personification, and are cited as instances of the use of "figura o colore rettorico." It is more important that the impression of naiveté produced in us by the defence of the right to personify Love is due to a prejudice of ours: the contemporary reader would not receive any such impression. The Italian lyric preceding Dante is full of arguments as to whether Love is a god or not, and as to whether Love subsists by itself apart from the lover or not, as well as of attempts to define love existing in the lover.⁷⁷ It was inevitable that, in this youthful work, the author should declare his position with regard to these matters. He foresaw this necessity when, in chapter twelve, he put off the explanation of why he had personified his ballata, until it could be included in the explanation of why he personified love, a matter which needed to be treated at some length.⁷⁸ It needed to be treated because it involved the larger question as to the author's views on the nature of love, views which would stamp him as adhering to this or that set of recognized opinions, and here, as Marigo has noted,⁷⁹ Dante is explaining that he is not averroistic enough to believe that intellectual love can subsist apart from the lover, and not enough of a realist — in the controversy between realists and nominalists — to hold that a universal idea can subsist apart from the substance that individualizes it. His personifying Love, he says, is merely the use of a recognized figure of speech, a

practice justified in the vulgar verse by the example of ancient poets in the classical tongue.

He himself knows what he is doing and is able to give his reasons, but there are those who imitate others in the use of this and other figures of speech without having any definite ideas as to the meaning and limitations of such figures, and they ought to be ashamed. These are the persons who, he says, write verses dressed in figurative language, but are unable to strip them of their clothing, that is, are unable to distinguish between the figure and the real meaning.⁸⁰ The expression "veste di figura o di colore rettorico" is a repetition of the expression "figura o colore rettorico" used before in the same paragraph with regard to the examples of personification: only those who are determined to find a reference to allegory can see it in these words. The *Vita Nuova* gives us no information whatever as to what the author knew or thought about the use of allegory, but if, as is possible, he was acquainted with the Aquinian doctrine on that subject, he could not be thinking of allegory when he was writing this chapter, for St. Thomas makes it clear that figures like these belong to the literal sense and not to the allegorical: "Per literalem sensum potest aliquid significari dupliciter, scilicet secundum proprietatem locutionis, sicut cum dico: 'homo ridet', vel secundum similitudinem seu metaphoram sicut cum dico: 'pratium ridet'..... et ideo sub sensu literalis includitur parabolicus, seu metaphoricus."⁸¹

There are no good reasons for supposing that the *Vita Nuova* is an allegory, but there are good reasons for believing that it is not. I will not dwell on the importance of Dante's own description of the book, when comparing it with the *Convivio*, as youthful and unsophisticated, nor on the conviction which the narrative carries to many readers that the author is saying all that he means and concealing nothing except what would be self-praise. As far as the poems are concerned, they are indeed easily distin

guishable, for the most part, from the previous and contemporary love-lyric, because of their greater beauty and originality, but they nevertheless belong to the great stream which originated in Southern France and flooded, rather than flowed into, Northern France, Italy and Germany. There is no characteristic of Dante's poetry that can be isolated and classified which does not find its counterpart in other poems by Italians, French or Germans, including the religious idealization of the lady and the mystical quality of love for her. Unless all or much of this poetry can be shown to be allegorical, it is improbable that Dante's verses were made with an allegorical intention.⁸²

Against the supposition that, in composing the *Vita Nuova*, Dante undertook to allegorize the contents of the poems is to be set the evidence of the twenty-fifth chapter. In that chapter the author defends his personification of Love, and condemns the unintelligent use of figures of speech. He explains that verse in the vulgar tongue was first devised in order to be understood by ladies, and implies that this is still its purpose, by declaring that it should have no other subject than love because that was its original subject. He refers to the Provençal and the early Italian poets, showing that he considers his own verse as of the same kind essentially as theirs. His desire to be understood by his readers is obvious, he abounds in explanation, but he says no word about allegory in his own verse or that of others, and least of all in the examples of personification that he cites: Love is nothing but love, just as Juno is nothing but the goddess, Aeolus is Aeolus and Rome is Rome. It follows, I think, that Beatrice is nothing but Beatrice, and to me it is inconceivable that the author should explain so much and say nothing about a hidden meaning pervading the whole work, if there were any.

On the other hand there are two little bits of allegory in the *Vita Nuova*, and these the author explains after

drawing our attention to them. The dream described in the first sonnet requires interpretation, and Dante tells us that it is prophetic of the death of Beatrice. It is true that he leaves the other details to us, implying that any good interpretation will do, but there is no concealment; and when he chooses to read a symbolical meaning into the apparition of Beatrice and Giovanna, in chapter twenty-four, he does so plainly and complacently, far-fetched as the interpretation is, since it is childishy based on the name of the second lady.

The prose of the *Vita Nuova*, besides being a connecting narrative, is an explanation of what the reader may fail to understand in the poems and of much that he could not fail to grasp. It is elaborate with its "divisioni", but except in the case of those poems that were not written for Beatrice, but which the poet thinks — or would have us think — were not written without some thought of her; and except for the obscure words "Ego tanquam centrum," which the sequel is expected to make clear, there is no hint of any hidden meaning; and even in the case of these exceptions there is only a pretence of concealment: it is learned criticism that has made a mystery of the figure of the circle and its centre.

Of the sonnet in chapter fourteen Dante says that the meaning will be clear to all, except perhaps to some who are less experienced servants of Love than himself. To this latter kind of reader it is no use trying to explain why Love is said to destroy all the faculties except those of sight, and why the physical organs of sight — the eyes — are not needed in the presence of the lady. Of eight other poems he says either that they are sufficiently explained by the preceding "ragione", which has described the occasion of their writing, or else that there is nothing to explain.⁸³ If the *Vita Nuova* contains a connected allegory, the author has buried it so deep in silence that no one but the Archangel will ever rouse it.⁸⁴

In previous essays⁸⁵ I have attempted to describe the rise of Dante's adult passion for Beatrice, after she had denied him the salutation which was the sign of her favour and had been the source of happiness in the private life of his phantasy. There remains to explain how he ceased to crave the satisfaction of a not unworthy human passion and became content with worshipping his lady. "Content", however, is a poor adjective to apply to a poet who is not conscious of any renunciation, but to whom the solution of his problem has brought ecstatic happiness ("beatitudine") in the triumph of a new understanding of his love and beloved.

In chapter thirteen he describes what he calls in the next chapter the "*battaglia de li diversi pensieri*," the conflict of thoughts which resulted in a clear view of his own humiliation. He was reduced to the ranks of the many conventional servants of Love who can only cry for mercy, and his lady was not the conventional lady who might ultimately be affected by the constant cry.⁸⁶ "*Volendo dire d'Amore, non so da qual parte pigli matera, e se la voglio pigliare da tutti, convenc che io chiami la mia inimica, madonna la Pietade; e dico 'madonna' quasi per disdegnoso modo di parlare.*"⁸⁷ It was a despicable situation: his love had before been precious for its singularity and it had been secret; now it could no longer be concealed and appeared commonplace as well as hopeless. His humiliation is acutely emphasized by the derision of Beatrice and her friends in the next chapter: he realizes that their view of him is that he is a lover of a well-known kind, hiding under a cloak of sentimentality a desire he is unwilling to confess. Why — he asks himself in chapter fifteen — why does he still seek her presence only to become an object of ridicule? It is because his passion is so powerful that it causes him to forget the rebuffs which have been peculiarly bitter to the proudest poet that ever lived. He has been hoping that his verses will be brought to her attention, as he tells

us at the end of the fourteenth chapter, and now he writes one more sonnet — which is to be the last — in which he makes a full confession for her ears. He has four new things to say: “La prima delle quali si è che molte volte io mi dolea, quando la memoria movesse la fantasia a immaginare quale Amore mi facea.” He grieves often over the difference between his former feeling for her and the violence of his present passion, which makes him appear contemptible in her eyes. “La seconda si è che Amore spesse volte m’assalia sì forte, che ’n’me non rimanea altro di vita se non un pensiero che parlava di questa donna.” Violent as his passion is it is altogether sincere; it leaves alive in him no other thought than of her; it is not a common craving. “La terza si è che quando questa battaglia d’Amore mi pugnava così, io mi movea quasi discolorito tutto per vedere questa donna, credendo che mi difendesse la sua veduta da questa battaglia...” It is not only the forgetfulness of previous disappointments, mentioned in the previous sonnet and repeated here, that causes him to seek her presence, but an instinctive confidence that she can protect him from the violence of his passion: he trusts in her for that. “La quarta si è come cotale veduta non solamente non mi difendea, ma finalmente disconfiggea la mia poca vita.” But his confidence is unaccountably misplaced, his appeal to her goodness is strangely disappointed.

And now that he has said all he has to say he resolves to write no more. He will preserve his self-respect by remaining silent: the love of a poet who, though in love, is silent, of one who has ceased to sing because he is misunderstood, is bound to be at least respected.

We have seen in the previous essays already mentioned⁸⁵ that from the time when, after the vision of chapter twelve, he had begun seriously to enquire into the nature of love, he had compared the views of Cavalcanti and Guinizelli and had inclined to prefer the doctrine of the latter that

love is the goodness in the heart of the lover seeking the goodness in the lady. It was inevitable that in pondering over the singularity of his lady and asking himself why his love was unacceptable to her, he should be impressed by the peculiar quality of Guinizelli's lady, who is the educator of her lover, and whose relation to him is like that of God to the angel who moves the sphere. It seems certain that, before the conversation with the ladies of chapter eighteen, Dante had reached the conclusion, at least subconsciously, that the reason why his love was unacceptable to Beatrice was that it was a passion which demanded correspondence and placed her on an equality with him. Beatrice was certainly not inferior to Guinizelli's ideal lady: to offer to her an earthly love would always be futile; to crave correspondence was insulting; to hope for it was ridiculous. Nothing but humble worship was her due, and if he were to write of her again it would have to be not as a suppliant lover but as a worshipper.

What was it that enabled Dante not so much to be reconciled to this new relation between him and Beatrice as to embrace it with joy? He was grieving not only over the loss of her favour but over the change in his own feeling for her; he remembered with grief the wonder of his early experiences when her salutation used to kindle in him the "fiamma di caritate" that exalted him above himself. The thought that when all claims upon her were removed she might be as much to him as she had ever been was grateful and comforting. Another thought, which may have come to him with startling effect, as great ideas often do, was also born of his recollections. Her early and glorious apparition; the good influence coming from her which had enveloped his youth and protected him from vice and triviality; the fact that this powerful influence had been exercised by means of occasional momentary meetings, a smile and a word of greeting; was not all this miraculous? Might she not have been born on Earth to be his guardian

angel, might he not have been resisting the will of Providence by entreating her for love of an inferior though innocent kind? If so she might still be far more to him than she had ever been before. This thought, which is a natural concomitant of Guinizelli's view both of Love and of the Lady, was of a kind to fire the imagination of the poet. What made it even dazzlingly attractive was the implication it carried of something else, something which Dante never dared, in this book, to declare openly: the implication that he himself was a predestined being, the object of a special providence. After all the humiliation which he had suffered, an idea such as this, even if only entertained as possible, would more than rehabilitate that self-respect that was so dear to him. He would never again need to cry for pity: "Madonna la Pietà," that conventional hypocrite, might go hide her head.

That Dante came to be convinced of the truth of these ideas is certain, but it is not clear whether his conversion to them was complete before his interview with the ladies of chapter eighteen, or whether that interview served to precipitate conclusions which were already in solution in his mind. The ladies are sympathetic and curious. They know much about Dante; they know that Beatrice is his beloved; they have witnessed many of his "sconfitte". He had not been able to conceal his passion as he had his early mystical devotion to her. Their interest in his case must have brought home to him the danger he had not quite avoided of becoming one of the many lovers who furnish an interesting subject for social conversation. He is anxious to persuade them that he is not a dejected lover in need of sympathy. On the contrary he is *beato*, but his happiness comes from a different source now that his lady is no longer kind. And when they press him to know whence comes this happiness, it may be the necessity of finding an answer that prompts him to utter the conclusion to which his reflections have been leading him. His "beatitudine", he

says, consists in the praise of his lady. But when his questioner is quick to point out that this doubtful "beatitudine" has not yet found expression in his verse, he has nothing to say. As he retreats from their presence he is glad that he has had the wit to answer right, but he wishes he had already justified his assertion, and he is thinking of nothing but the "nuova matera" to which he is committed. After much hesitation and thought there comes forth the joyful song of magnificent praise which his conversion has made possible, the song which declares that Beatrice is allowed to remain on earth for the protection of one who will sing her praise in hell if he happen to be among the lost. The spontaneous beauty of the poem, the first words of which were uttered as if the poet's tongue had been "per sè stessa mossa," testify to the vividness of his new intuition.

Needless to say a conversion like this would only have been possible for one to whom the life of the imagination was as real as the life of material circumstance, nor would it have been possible for anyone who had not, like Dante, been accustomed from childhood to think and feel religiously.

When the poem had become "alquanto divulgata tra le genti" the new inspiration did not pass unnoticed. Dante was requested to state explicitly his views on the nature of love, and he complied in the sonnet that endorses the theory of Guinizelli, and then followed it with another in which the singularity of Beatrice is triumphantly affirmed. She is not to be associated as an equal with other gentle ladies, she can make capable of love even those who are born incapable, and all those who come within her influence share it with Dante to some extent.⁸⁸ She, like the Virgin Mary, is elevated above all the rest, without pride and inspiring no jealousy.

It is not astonishing that she should be endowed with miraculous powers. The conversion I have been describing is a religious conversion and implies faith in miracles.

Guinizelli's ideal lady is also gifted with supernatural powers, and this gentle creature who has been placed upon earth for a special divine purpose is quite naturally a miracle-worker, but her miracles are of a spiritual kind unknown to herself: she is unconscious of her mission, she goes her way thinking herself no better than her fellows, radiant with heavenly beauty.

Only her adoring poet knows but does not dare to say openly why she is here on earth. He knows that when her mission is accomplished she will return to her home in heaven. The stanza of chapter twenty-seven with its peaceful, joyful contentment is a sign to the reader that her mission is fulfilled, and she is gone.

The "*nuova materia che appresso viene*"⁸⁹ is the logical sequel to that which had begun with "*Donne che avete.*" Beatrice, who had been entrusted with a holy mission on Earth such as makes it not unnatural to speak of her with words that suggest a comparison with Christ and the Virgin Mary,⁹⁰ has now gone to gladden the angels and saints who had besought God for her presence. The mourning of the poet is shot through with gleams of light descending from her: "*sol nel mio lamento Chiamo Beatrice, e dico: 'or se' tu morta?' E mentre ch'io la chiamo, me conforta.*" "*Ma qual ch'io sia la mia donna il si vede, E io ne spero ancor da lei mercede.*"⁹¹ The difference in the "*nuova materia*" is that now Beatrice knows that she was Dante's guardian angel on earth and that she is his saint in heaven, whereas while she pursued her way on Earth she was unconscious of her mission. Direct communication with her was impossible while she lived, but now it is possible through ecstatic vision. She comforts him, she watches over him and rescues him from the temptation of the "*donna gentile*" : she draws him to her. It is impossible for him to imagine her now that she is pure spirit; the sighs which rise to her and seek her "*beyond the heaven that widest whirls*"⁹² bring back only the dimmest understand-

ing of her new condition, but he still holds her by the womanhood she still preserves: he knows that she is still guarding and guiding him. Perhaps he gazed upon her without let in the "mirabile visione."

She is still a woman, she has never become a symbol of anything. It is true that Dante says of her: "No la ci tolse qualità di gelo Nè di calore, come l'altre face,"⁹³ but that is a figure of speech which he would have known how to "denudare... in guisa che [avesse] verace intendimento." In the canzone "Quantunque volte" he says plainly that his lady was overtaken by the cruelty of death,⁹⁴ and almost the last words of the *Vita Nuova* are: "io spero di dicer di lei quello che mai non fue detto d'alcuna," where "alcuna" can mean nothing but *alcuna donna*.⁹⁵

By the "character" of the *Vita Nuova* I mean the purpose of the author as it is executed in the book. That purpose can be understood clearly in the light of the "moment" of the work. It was when he had been rescued from a worldly affection which threatened to defeat the protecting influence of his saint in heaven, that, full of contrition for his ingratitude, he wrote the *Vita Nuova* as a confession of his indebtedness to Beatrice. This no doubt was part of his purpose, but there was more.

The "forte imaginazione" of chapter xxxix recalls him to Beatrice by presenting her to his memory as he first saw her when she was a child; the sonnet "Oltre la spera" of chapter xli (xlii) is an attempt to contemplate her as she is now, a saint in heaven; the intervening chapter, xl (xli), dwells on the desolation caused by her death when she was an adult woman. These chapters, with the last, which mentions the "mirabile visione," correspond to the "moment" of the *Vita Nuova*.

His thoughts at this time, concentrated upon Beatrice,⁹⁶ travel from the memory of her as a child, through the recollection of her life and death, to the vision of her as

a saint. He is reading, rapidly but absorbed, the book of his memory from which he is to transcribe the contents of the "libello". He sees himself bewildered at the first apparition, but cherishing the memory of it; permanently enthralled by the kindly salutation; adoring the image in his memory and living a double life; desperate over the loss of his lady's kindness; passionately and hopelessly in love; struggling to reconcile his experience with the known theories of love; realizing at last the exceptional character of Beatrice, and the astonishing dignity of her relation to him; blissfully happy in the new understanding of the lady and his love for her; crushed by her sudden death; lured, after a time, into forgetfulness of her by the affectionate sympathy of a living woman.

Convinced again, and now more than ever, by the loving intervention of the saint who watches over him from above, acknowledging that he is her special charge, communing with him and offering herself to him in the spirit; convinced that in all his life of love he has been miraculously led; weeping over his own past ignorance, he is drawn gropingly upward to meet his Beatrice, by the new knowledge ("*intelligenza nova*") that has enabled him to read his own story. And then comes the vision that is too marvellous to describe.

The story which Dante has thus been enabled to read aright is to be told: it is too important to be withheld. It is punctuated with incidents which have been the occasion of poems. The author is a poet of love, and the expression of his love has always been in verse, as is only proper. The poems, then, arranged in the proper order, should tell the story of his love, but would they? Dante well knows that they would not. Some of them are too conventional to express clearly anything important. Others refer too definitely to extraneous circumstances which would distract the readers' attention from the proper subject. More important still: most of them were written without the

knowledge the poet now has of the significance of the events concerned. The poems, then, must be carefully selected, and those chosen to make up the book must be interpreted, whenever it is necessary, so as to remove too material suggestions that jar with the religious atmosphere which the story has in the mind of the author, and so as to imply the significance which he now sees in the incidents. Whether the idea of connecting the poems by narrative and explanatory prose was derived from Boethius, Raimbaut d'Aurenga,⁹⁷ or the biographer of Bertran de Born, or from no one at all, it was at any rate necessary for Dante's purpose.

His chief purpose is to so tell the story of his astonishing experience that the stages by which he was led to understand the miraculous power of his lady, and to have for her a finer kind of love than had hitherto been conceived, should be apparent to the reader. In this way he was giving a better answer than had hitherto been imagined — and perhaps he thought it was a final answer — to the question so often asked and answered before: What is fine love? The "alquanti grossi" who had first sung of love in verse had only played with the question; even his friend Cavalcanti had reached a false conclusion, in spite of his zeal for scientific truth, and since the *Vita Nuova* is dedicated to him it may be that he was the reader whom Dante chiefly had in mind. It was Guido Guinizelli who had had the right intuition when he vindicated, although hesitatingly, the right of fine sexual love to be compared to the worship of God. Dante was now proving by his own experience that love may be not only good and truly ennobling but even holy, stronger than death, and blessed by God, the "sire de la cortesia" to whom the poet's last words confidently appeal.

Dante's theory of love is here in its infancy. No other than fine sexual love is considered. Sensual love is ignored and so is the love of knowledge for its own sake. This fine

sexual love is not yet identified with the love for God, still less is there any hint of the essential unity of all love. The doctrine of Guinizelli is restated and the manner in which potential love is aroused to actuality is clearly defined, otherwise there is no doctrine but only illustration in the experience of the author. And yet there can be no doubt that here we have the seed out of which will grow Dante's great theory of love which is already elaborate in the *Convivio* and the *Monarchia* and is the backbone of the *Commedia*; for Beatrice is, while on earth, the unconscious means of grace to Dante; she is "in altissimo grado di bontade," and love for her implies the love of goodness. Nevertheless it should be clearly understood that this book is not a miniature *Commedia* any more than it is a *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is not a story of salvation from sin and of rescue from its consequences.⁹⁸ The episode of the *Donna Gentile*, at the end of the book, is the only instance of what might be called a temporary lapse from grace. Otherwise, if the purpose of the book had been similar to that of the *Commedia*, we should have seen Dante, after the death of Beatrice, and especially at the end of the story, turning to God in grateful adoration; but in the last chapters as elsewhere there is no word of gratitude to God, the thoughts of the poet are concentrated upon his Beatrice, the memories of her and the yearning to be with her: the last words of the book as the first are about Beatrice, and Dante's love for Beatrice is the only subject of the whole work⁹⁹.

The *Vita Nuova* is the story of how Dante, the poet of Love, singled out by an inscrutable Providence, was led by Beatrice, a lady endowed for his sake with miraculous powers for good, to free himself first from the conventional superficiality of other poets of love, and then from the serious naturalism of still other poets, and to experience a finer because holier kind of sexual love than had hitherto been dreamt of.¹⁰⁰

NOTES

1, p. 163. — Cf. Fiammazzo, ed. 13. For the date, cf. Rocca, 48-51 and Roediger in *Riv. Cr. It.* N. S. Anno VII, num. 4 (ottobre 1891) col. 103.

2, p. 163. — Cf. Rocca, 96, and for the date, 117.

3, p. 163. — Cf. Rocca, *ibid.* 325-33.

4, p. 163. — Cf. Rocca, *ibid.* 316; for the passage asserting the reality of Beatrice, 293-94.

5, p. 164. — V. N. vi and xxix (xxx). The almost complete unanimity of Dante scholars in accepting his way of dating the death of Beatrice as proof of her reality does not justify us in dismissing superciliously the opinion of the one dissentient. Grasso (pp. 53-56) believes that, in order to represent the perfection of Beatrice most impressively, Dante chose to date her death by the use of the calendars of the three parts of the world, Europe, Asia, and Africa. "Non... pare che così Dante, ingenuo visionario, potesse almanaccare che *tutti e 9 li mobili cieli*, i quali *ne la generazione* di Beatrice *perfettissimamente s'avano insieme* in un con tutte e tre le parti della terra partecipassero al lutto dell' anima sua, attestando che veramente *il 9 fue ella medesima?*" Let us not deceive ourselves: this is a possibility. But what a possibility! There is nothing impressive about the dating once it is suspected that the date has been deliberately chosen so as to produce a nine in three calendars. The impressiveness depends on the reader's being convinced that the death is a real event, and Dante must, therefore, have counted on convincing his readers by suggesting to them the argument which we all, except Grasso, use. In that case there is no use in basing any opinion on any of Dante's statements: he is not Grasso's "ingenuo visionario," but the most artful deceiver imaginable. Our critic does not shrink from this conclusion; he says (55): "E se Dante usa una volta *un' espressione approssimativa*, come nel § xxxix [*quasi ne l'ora de la nona*] chi dice ... che ci ò non sia malizia?"

6, p. 164. — V. N. xxiv, verse 9 of the sonnet: "io vidi monna Vanna e monna Bice."

7, p. 164. — Cf. McKenzie, ed. p. xix: "Except in the sonnet of xxiv, where she is called Monna Bice, the name of Beatrice is not mentioned in the poems written during her life. After her death, both in verse and in prose the name is frequent in the full form, Beatrice, with emphasis on its significance. Nowhere does Dante give a hint as to her identity." Cf. also Scherillo ed. 436-47.

8, p. 164. — Del Lungo 2, note 1 to p. 101.

9, p. 164. — Rocca, 413-15.

10, p. 164. — Zappia, 325-26, n., does think that this passage, with a good deal of its context, as well as another from the comment on *Purg.* xxxi, where the reality of Beatrice is declared, have been interpolated by another author, but if we try to remove these alleged interpolations we find we cannot do so without disconnecting the sense. The first passage begins with the words: "Venio ad quartum et ultimum" referring back to the beginning

of the comment on this canto, where it is said: "Continuando se auctor ad proxime precedencia in hoc C^o quatuor facit. Primo exorditur. Secundo invocatur. Tercio ceptum suum iter revocat in dubium prosequi. Quarto inducit Virgilium dictum dubium tollere, etc." So that if the passage in question were removed there would be no treatment of the fourth division of the subject. The same passage ends with the words: "qua mortua [i. e. Beatrice] ut in [sic] eius nomen in famam levaret, in hoc suo poemate sub allegoria et typo theologie eam ut plurimum accipere voluit," and the continuation is: "Et hinc est quod fingendo auctor hic nunc Virgilium de ea loqui, ut dicit textus, facit eum vocare eam dominam virtutis per quam humana species, id est intellectus humanus, excedit, id est transcendit, a celo minori, videlicet a spera lune usque ad impyreum tractando de contentis in eis celis." So that if the passage were removed there would be nothing for the "Et hinc est quod, etc." to refer to.

Zappia's second example is: "Post hoc auctor mystice loquens, scilicet ad litteram in hoc passu et allegorice, inducit ipsam Beatricem non sub typo theologie sed ut animam ipsius Beatricis mulieris iam corporaliter defuncte ad reprehendendum eum, ut olim eius procum, cur post eius mortem ad aliam rem mortalem amandam et sequendam processit, ut fuit pargolecta, eius sequens domina in procando, cum nunquam natura vel ars, id est pictura, sibi in hoc mundo presentaverit pulcriorem formam mulieris, quam fuerit sua mortalis extinta." And the continuation is: "Item intelligi potest auctor et loqui in hoc passu sic allegorice, quod nulla scientia mundana, ut mortalis res et stulta, unde apostolus ad Corint., etc., debuit eum ad se trahere mortua ipsa Beatrice, id est mortificata dicta scientia theologie in eo, et eius studio et amore, propter dictam pargolectam, id est propter poesiam figuratam in hac pargolecta, etc." If we remove the suspected passage there is nothing for the continuation to refer to, and the phrases "dictam pargolectam" and "hac pargolecta" become meaningless.

Zappia might reasonably speak of alterations, for the Ashburnham version is different from both the other versions, but not of interpolations. Nor ought he to say so decidedly as he does: "Il commentatore... non conosce altra Beatrice che l'allegorica, così nella prima redazione... come nella seconda del codice Vaticano," for in the Vatican manuscript (cf. Rocca, 420) occurs the following sentence: "Ex quibus verbis et auctoritatibus satis possumus invenire in hoc passu ad [sic] velatam intentionem auctoris loquentis hic in persona Beatricis ita de se, ut de muliere olim corporali et carnali, prout fuit in hac vita, et inde mortua et sepulta, ut res mortalis..." Dinsmore (105-06) also speaks of an interpolation as probable, but without supporting the statement.

11, p. 165. — Rocca, *Del Commento di Pietro di Dante ecc.* in *GSLII*. VII, 366-85. The version of the Ashburnham and Barberinian manuscripts is later than the original version, which was certainly written by Pietro Alighieri in 1340-41 (cf. Rocca, 350-52). It is a complete "rifacimento" of that original version, never copying it but presenting the same substance in the same style and with the same special interest in expounding the allegory to

the neglect of the literal sense. The numerous citations, which are a feature of the original version, are even more numerous in this. It is plainly not a forgery, and if the author is not Pietro Alighieri, he is a person of equally wide learning with identical views on interpretation, and perseveringly careful to recast the whole matter without altering the exposition and without copying. The handwriting of the text and of the rubrics in the Ashburnham manuscript seems to belong to northern Italy; one of the watermarks is identical with that on paper used in Padua between 1361 and 1369; strips of parchment which reinforce the bindings of the quires, and which belong to the time when the leaves were first sewn together, contain writing that concerns the city of Verona, where Pietro lived after the death of his father.

There is still another version, contained in the Vatican Ottoboniano ms. 2867, which is much closer to that of the Ashburnham and Barberinian manuscripts than to the original. It claims to have been written by Pietro di Dante, and does not contain the passage identifying Beatrice. Rocca believes this version to be anterior to the Ashburnham and Barberinian version, because the latter, in many places although not in all, offers what seems to be a compendium of the former. Rocca's conclusion is: "Io dunque ritengo... che il figlio di Dante, dopo aver compilato il suo commento tra il 1340 e il 41, pensasse più tardi a rifarlo da capo a fondo nella seconda redazione, che si ha nel codice Vaticano; poi, non contento ancora, ritoccasse di nuovo in più luoghi questa seconda redazione procurandone così una terza, quella del codice Ashburnhamiano." (Rocca, 405).

Cesareo's attack on the authenticity of the lines which identify Beatrice (published last in Cesareo, ed. 158-62) is chiefly based on the fact that in the Barberinian ms. XLV, 123, which contains the same version of the commentary as the Ashburnham manuscript, including the words about Beatrice, the commentary is not ascribed to Pietro Alighieri. Whereas in the Ashburnham Pietro is mentioned at the beginning and again at the end of the commentary, in the Barberinian his name is omitted in both the corresponding places. It was evidently omitted, as Cesareo says, on purpose, and he suggests that the writer of the Barberinian manuscript knew that this version of the commentary was not by Pietro Alighieri. It is more likely that he was in doubt.

Supposing that the Barberinian scribe had before him only one exemplar of the commentary, and that this was a version like that of the Ashburnham manuscript, he would be without the information conveyed by the usual title such as stands at the head of the Vatican manuscript: "Comentum sapientis viri domini Petri de Alegheriis de Florentia iurisperiti, etc." He would find only the title of the Ashburnham manuscript: "Prologo primo supra a la prima cantica de la comedia de Dante Alleghieri da Fiorenza." Also, instead of the clear introductory sentence of the Vatican manuscript: "Quamvis poema comedie Dantis Alagherii de Florentia mei Petri gratissimi genitoris dudum non nulli calamo temptaverint aperire, etc." he would find the words: "Quamvis librum comedie Dantis Alegerii de Florentia Petri mei genitoris

non modicum in suo tegumento clausum et obscurum hactenus [non] nulli temptaverint totaliter calamo aperire, etc.," which at first sight seem to mean that this is a commentary by a son of Pietro. His suspicions aroused, the scribe may have decided to write instead of "librum comedie Dantis Alegerii de Florentia Petri mei genitoris" his awkward but noncommittal: "librum comedie Dantis Alegerij de Flor.^a mei precessoris," after doing which he would have to omit the phrase "ego Petrus prefatus" at the end of the work.

Cesareo says (ed. 162) that the absence of facts about Beatrice in the first two versions of the commentary shows that "Pietro Alighieri non seppe e non potè dare notizie della figliuola di Folco prima del 1355," but it is quite unreasonable to say that. Rocca, in describing the general character of the commentary, had already emphasized the preoccupation of the author with matters of doctrine and with the allegory of the poem. "Non è da credere che gli manchino le notizie; perchè dal poco che ne tocca si arguisce anzi che era ben informato di parecchi avvenimenti e di individui menzionati dal Poeta: è piuttosto ch' egli, tutto occupato nella dichiarazione dottrinale ed allegorica, cerca di sbrigarsi presto di tutto il rimanente." (Rocca, 366.)

12, p. 165. — The suggestion of De Labusquette (437) that the passage identifying Beatrice was taken from Boccaccio's life of Dante, which was not written until 1360 or later, should not therefore be entertained.

13, p. 165. — The date of the *Trattatello* has never been definitely determined. Macri-Leone (Boccaccio I, p. LXXIX), concluded that it was written at Certaldo between 1363 and 1364, but none of his respectable arguments amount to a demonstration. It seems certain that it was not written until after the completion of the first version of the *De Casibus*, at the end of which occurs the interview with the shade of Dante, where Boccaccio indicates his intention of writing about the life of the great poet, and where there is no indication of his having as yet written anything of the kind. But the date of the *De Casibus* is just as hard to determine as that of *Trattatello*. Everything, however, points to the conclusion that the former work was not finished until after the visit of Boccaccio to Petrarch in 1359 (see Hauvette, 352-53; 355-58; 391-96) and so Hauvette's cautious statement about the *Trattatello*, "il est raisonnable d'en reporter la composition aux environs de 1360," errs, if at all, in the direction of placing the date too early. For the authenticity of the *Trattatello* and the *Compendio*, and the priority of the former, see Barbi, in *St. G. B.*, 101-42.

14, p. 165. — Boccaccio 3, Vol. I, pp. 10-12.

15, p. 165. — Guerri, 209.

16, p. 165. — Boccaccio 3, Vol. I, p. 214.

17, p. 165. — The other parallels drawn by Cesareo (ed. 166-67) are anything but convincing, and the resemblance between the two sentences I have mentioned may well be due to nothing more than the circumstance that both writers are commenting on the first appearance of the name 'Beatrice' in the *Commedia*.

- 18, p. 166. — Fiammazzo ed. 12.
 19, p. 166. — Rocca, 57, n. 1.
 20, p. 167. — De Labusquette (437) supposes that this information is derived from the same source as Boccaccio's. One cannot tell whether it is or not, but if it were, that source would be very important.
 21, p. 167. — Rocca, 51, n. 1.
 22, p. 167. — *Ibid.* 245-46, and 312-25. Cf. Rocca in *DVOp.* 339.
 23, p. 167. — Cf. Rocca in *GD.* XI, 142-43. Del Lungo 2, 59-61 and in *N. Ant.* 1° giugno 1890, p. 423. Randi, who wrongly attributed certain children to her, presented evidence that the husband of Beatrice was a Messer Simone di Giuliano de' Bardi. His argument is persuasive and persuaded Kraus (218, n.), but the witness of the Magliabechian ms. *Palc.* I, 39, corroborates Del Lungo's conclusion. Davidsohn (*IV Bd.*, 3 Teil, p. 195, and *DDJ.* X), who says that the "Messer Simone" in question was Simone di Messer Jacopo de' Bardi, seems to be mistaken.
 24, p. 167. — The declaration of Francesco Da Buti (*Da Buti* ed. Vol. II, p. 740) that Beatrice was not "una donna di carne e d'ossa," which is, of course, known to be untrue, has nothing to do with Bice Portinari.
 25, p. 168. — *Pro.* I (1868) 443.
 26, p. 169. — The petition of the citizens of Florence in 1366 expresses their desire to be instructed "in libro Dantis" which "vulgariter appellatur *el Dante*." The *Commedia* is for them the only work by Dante. Cf. Guerri, 206.
 27, p. 169. — Solerti ed. 98.
 28, p. 169. — Boccaccio 3, Vol. I, p. 214.
 29, p. 169. — *Ibid.* 49.
 30, p. 169. — Cf. Barbi ed. p. clxxv, and n. 2. The sentence of Zappia (322): "...non si può prescindere dal fatto che il Boccaccio non mostra di avere attentamente esaminato nè la *Vita Nuova*, nè il *Convivio*" is quaint, to say the least.
 31, p. 170. — Cf. Guerri, 216-44.
 32, p. 170. — Cf. Della Torre, 342-45.
 33, p. 170. — Cf. Davidsohn *IV Bd.*, 3 Teil, notes to p. 196.
 34, p. 170. — Cf. Del Lungo 29, and Randi 15-16.
 35, p. 170. — Cf. Barbi in *StD.* I (1920), 148-55.
 36, p. 170. — De Labusquette, 439.
 37, p. 171. — That she was married is proved by her being called "Monna Bice." Not that the epithet "donna" or "madonna" necessarily designates a married woman, but the combination of the title with the name is always a clear indication that she is married. Del Lungo (2, 101, n. 71) quotes the *Cronica Domestica* of Velluti as follows: "La Bice, poi monna Bice, figliuola del detto Bindo, fu maritata a Nolfo ecc." Notice the difference between the mention of the unmarried and the married daughters of Folco Portinari in his will (*ibid.* 113): "Item Vanne, Fie, Margarite, et Castorie fliabus suis, relinquit, etc. Item *domine* Bici etiam filie sue, et uxori domini Simonis de Bardis, legavit, etc. Item Nicole nepoti suo, filio Bandini de Falconeriis ex *domina* Ravignana uxore sua, filia olim ipsius testatoris, legavit, etc." Cf. Flamini

1, 43-44: "Convien distinguere bene *madonna* usato genericamente nel senso di "la mia donna" da *monna* o *madonna* premesso a un dato nome: il primo caso è frequentissimo, il secondo — ch'io sappia — molto raro nei nostri antichi dicatori. A buon conto, son tutte maritate le monne Lise, monne Ciole, monne Lape del noto sermintese pucciano."

38, p. 171. — Cf. Guerri, 209.

39, p. 172. — Cf. Boccaccio 2, pp. LXXVI-LXXXII, and Guerri, 17-22.

40, p. 172. — Valli's motive for denying the identity of Beatrice and Bice Portinari is that he has discovered, guided by Rossetti, Perez and others, that Dante as well as the other poets of the "dolce stil nuovo" belonged to a secret society called "fedeli d'Amore" which, having come to the conclusion that the church was no longer the repository of truth, had engaged in the heretical worship of divine wisdom apart from orthodox religion. The ladies celebrated by the poets are all symbols of Divine Wisdom or of the Society of the "fedeli d'Amore." Boccaccio was a member of the society, and, according to Valli, undertook the superhuman task of lecturing on the *Commedia* every day of the week except holidays for a whole year, not with the purpose of enlightening his hearers but to deceive them. All the while he was explaining Dante he was laughing in his sleeve at the thick skulls that were taking it all in. It was all the funnier because he was being well paid by the gullible Florentines, and among the "gente grossa" was the honest Benvenuto who was taking notes and swallowing everything without blinking. Boccaccio boasted of his exploit in the sonnet: "Io ò messo in galea senza biscotto — l'ingrato vulgo." (cf. Valli, 265).

For accounts of the earlier discussion as to Beatrice, see the defence of her reality by Canepa, the admirable criticism of Moore, the impartial summary of Gargano Cosenza 1, and the work of wider scope by Menzio. I know of no reviews of the modern discussion.

41, p. 172. — Bartoli, Vol. IV, pp. 185-201.

42, p. 172. — Cf. *e. g.* Earle in *QR*. Vol. 184 (1896), p. 53.

43, p. 173. — Biscioni ed. pp. xi-xii.

44, p. 173. — Such explanations, are *e. g.* Rossetti's political allegories, and Aroux's interpretation of the "nines" applied to Beatrice, who represents Dante's own soul. Termini-Trigona thought that the father of Beatrice was Thomas Aquinas, Gietmann, that he was Pope Celestinus V. Earle thought that the sixty "più belle donne de la cittade" celebrated in Dante's "serventese" were Biblical persons: "Eve, Adah, Zillah, Sarah," etc. (*QR*. Vol. 184, p. 42), a conjecture which would throw a strange light on the sonnet "Guido i' vorrei."

45, p. 173. — The learned of work Pérez has more to do with the *Commedia* than with the *Vita Nuova*. He reviews the contents of both and of the *Convivio*, and then considers them all together to decide what is the significance of Beatrice. He concludes that she represents the "Active Intelligence," and that this is the "idea coordinatrice" (p. 389) which makes one work of all three. He goes

deeply into the history of the idea of the "Active Intelligence," tracing it from the Greeks and Persians to Augustine, Albertus, and Richard of St. Victor. All the mass of erudition for which there is evidence in the *Commedia* he attributes to the author of the *Vita Nuova*. He never enquires as to the date of the latter work, nor has he anything to say about the Provençal and early Italian poetical traditions inherited by Dante.

Filippo Meda's work: *La Beatrice dantesca* (in *Saggi critici*. Piccola biblioteca scientif. lett. Milano, Anno 1892. Ser. II, n° 4), which is known to me only by means of Gargano Cosenza 1, appears to be a vindication of the unity of *Vita Nuova*, *Convivio*, and *Commedia*: Beatrice is a symbol of theology in all three.

Earle, whose article in *QR*. Vol. 184, is reproduced in Italian in *Bibl. Stor.-Cr. d. Lett.* Dant. dir. d. C. L. Passerini e P. Papa, Vol. XI, Bologna, 1899, considers the *Vita Nuova* to be an allegorical representation of the conflict between faith and science in the mind of Dante. Beatrice represents Faith as opposed to Science, and Theology as opposed to Philosophy. The ladies "of the defence," as well as the Donna Gentile, represent Science or Philosophy. Faith, Theology, and the Church are kindred ideas, and so Beatrice may also be the Church. She represents the Church in *Donne che avete*, where she could not be either Faith or Theology because all the saints in heaven are deprived of her presence and longing for her. The allegory is vague because Dante's ideas were vague, he was not completely master of his meaning. "He cannot reduce it to a clear analysis, but he can picture it in the vague similitudes of analogy and allegory." (p. 28.)

46, p. 173. — *La Vita Nuova e la Fiammetta* was published in 1879. In that book, unlike the other allegorists who had paid little attention to the chronology of the works of Dante, Renier thought it important to determine the date of the *Vita Nuova*, and whereas the others had founded their interpretations largely on the *Commedia*, he considered it unimportant for the understanding of the earlier work. He believed, however, that the dates of the *Convivio* and the *Vita Nuova* overlap so that they are to be thought of as written about the same time, the latter being finished before the banishment of Dante. In his article in *GSLIt.* II (1883) 366-95, he has become a complete allegorist, and after propounding to the realists a long list of difficulties (pp. 384-90) he sets forth his own theory (390-95). Accepting the view of Bartoli that Beatrice is an ideal of feminine perfection, Renier sees in the *Vita Nuova* three stages in the symbolism of that idea. At first she is Dante's ideal of womanhood which he thinks he finds realized first in one woman and then in another — the ladies "of the defence." When we come to the episode of "Ego tanquam centrum," Dante begins to understand that this ideal of his is reflected in numerous women and not in any single one. This is the significance of the "gabbo" episode when this second Beatrice appears in a mocking attitude, making fun of him with other ladies. When she dies she becomes the pure abstract which is the ideal for everyone and no longer peculiar to Dante. Needless to say many objections might be offered to this theory. Renier does not touch on details such as

the death of the father of Beatrice, which would need explaining. More important is the objection that at the end of the *Vita Nuova* Beatrice seems to belong more peculiarly to Dante than ever before.

47, p. 173. — Renier, 171-72.

48, p. 174. — The great exception is Valli, who deserves credit for having the courage of his convictions. Instead of being content with indicating a general theory of allegory in the *Vita Nuova*, he has undertaken to interpret many poems by others beside Dante, and many episodes of the *Vita Nuova*, in accordance with his theory of a "code" language employed by the poets who belonged to a secret unorthodox society, to communicate to each other the few simple beliefs which they had in common and a few simple incidents. This honest attempt to demonstrate a theory, however, results in the destruction of the theory. A careful examination of any of these interpretations shows them to be either improbable or impossible. One example from poets other than Dante will have to suffice. Valli's interpretation of the last stanza of Guinizelli's *Al cor gentil*, where God says

lo ciel passasti 'nfin a me venisti,
et desti in vano amor me per sembiante.
Ch'a me convien la laude, ecc.,

is: "Se Iddio mi domanderà quando sarò avanti a lui se io, amando, ho amato una donna vera con vano amore mentre Iddio solo deve essere amato, io gli risponderò che quella che io ho amato era la Sapienza santa, divina Intelligenza (angelo), e apparteneva al regno divino." (209). But God is not asking the poet for information about anything. He is accusing the poet, and his accusation is of course true. The poet does not attempt to deny it, but he offers as his excuse that the lady was so like an angel that he could not help adoring her:

...tenne d'angel sembianza
che fosse dil tuo regno,

and his answer proves that the lady was a living woman.

As for the *Vita Nuova*, it is more convenient than convincing that Beatrice should be sometimes "la Sapienza" and at other times "la setta," i. e. the secret society, and that Amore can mean either the love of wisdom or again "la setta." The father of Beatrice could be no other than God if she were "la Sapienza," but he dies and God does not. Since Beatrice may also mean "la setta," it is possible to conjecture that her father may be some unknown "founder" of the society (301-302). In the lines.

Dice di lei Amor: "Cosa mortale
Come esser po' sì adorna e sì pura !,

Amore and the lady cannot both be "la setta" or "la Sapienza," and so the interpretation is: "Amore (la setta) insegna che la

Sapienza santa così adorna e pura non può essere una cosa mortale..." (293), a good example of the platitudes which are the substance of these poems according to our critic. The death of Beatrice in the vision of the canzone "Donna Pietosa" represents the dispersion of "la setta," while her ascent to heaven means the departure of wisdom from the earth (302-03), but the death of Beatrice reported in *V. N.* xxviii (xxix) is the transformation of wisdom into ecstatic vision, the "excessus mentis" of Pascoli (308-09). The "donne" so often mentioned and addressed in the poetry of the time are the "adepti", members of the society, and from *V. N.* xxv, where Dante says that poetry was first written in the vulgar tongue for the sake of ladies who could not understand Latin verses easily, it would seem to follow, although Valli does not say so, that the "adepti" were humble worshippers of "la Sapienza," and weak in Latin. The favourite lady, however, to whom each poet addresses his verses, is always either "la Sapienza" or "la setta," and when Dante writes the sonnet *Io mi senti' svegliar* he is announcing to his friend that he, Dante, and his "Sapienza" have now superceded Guido and his "Sapienza" (Giovanna) in the command of "la setta" (304). Apart from all other considerations, this would not seem to be the act of a gentleman. When Beatrice withdraws her salutation, Amore explains to Dante that "Beatrice ha sentito dire che la donna dello schermo 'ricevea da te alcuna noia'" (283). According to Valli the "donna dello schermo" is the Church (282), and since Beatrice ("la Sapienza" or "la setta") is the enemy of the Church, it is not clear why she should be vexed at the annoyance caused to the Church. We are told (283) that it means that "la setta" suspects that Dante has become a "seguace della Chiesa," but to be a follower of the Church is not the same thing as annoying the Church. Loose reasoning of this kind is very frequent in Valli's book; see for example pp. 273-74 where one exceedingly questionable conjecture, which is called a "logi-cissima spiegazione," is used to support another, and is said to confirm the latter "validamente". If the so much abused "critica positiva" is more careful in its reasoning, it is preferable to this kind of argumentation: the exquisite Clecner was hardly less reasonable.

19, p. 176. — Pérez studies Dante's theory of knowledge in the *Commedia*, and applies it to the *Vita Nuova* without a qualm. Gietmann says (p. viii) "An der Identität der mit dem Namen Beatrice in den verschiedenen Werken belegten Gestalt ist kein vernünftiger Zweifel möglich, und so sind denn alle vier gleichmässig berufen, uns als Quellen für die richtige Deutung des Characteres jener Gestalt zu dienen..." Earle says: "Beatrice is one and the same character from first to last, from the opening of the 'Vita Nuova' down to the close of the 'Paradiso'." (*Q. R.* Vol. 184, p. 28.) "The *donna gentile* is to be understood according to Dante's explanation in the 'Convito' as *donna Filosofia*. We must either accept Dante's statement as the simple truth, or accuse him of falsifying the evidence. There is no escape from this alternative." (p. 29). Pascoli's explanation of the allegory in the *Vita Nuova* (Pascoli, 2 pp. 3-64) consists of a commentary made up of pas-

sages from the *Commedia* and the *Convivio*. Gargano-Cosenza (2, p. 62): "Le varie sue opere sono come le varie faccette d'uno stesso diamante; alcune più larghe, più lucide... ma la sostanza è sempre unica; il concetto informatore di tutte è sempre il grande edificio teologico, politico, morale che egli si era formato nella sua mente vasta e direi quasi enciclopedica..." Professor Fletcher's first exposition, in *Mod. Phil.*, XI, 20-37, might reasonably be called 'The *Vita Nuova* according to St. Thomas Aquinas'. His second, in *RR.* XI, 122-31 and 141-48, is supported by citations chiefly from Albertus Magnus, the *Convivio*, and the *Commedia*. Cochin tr. (pp. VII-VIII): "Mais ce qui nous remplit d'étonnement... c'est de constater en lui un bagage philosophique, scientifique, philologique et littéraire si vaste, si complet, aussi rapidement ramassé pendant les courtes années d'une jeunesse laborieuse." (p. xi): "Ce jeune homme du monde, ce soldat, ce poète, acquiert toute la science de son temps... avant l'âge de trente ans." Scarano 2, 105: "Dante... volle non solo a ciascuna delle sue opere dare unità e armonia, ma volle anche comporre tra loro in modo da sembrare come un solo edificio, com' un' opera sola, intesa al bene dell' umanità." Cf. Scherillo in *DVOp.*, 51-52: "Codesti critici... hanno il torto di considerare la complessa opera di Dante quasi fosse sbocciata tutt' insieme, nell'istante medesimo, rigida Minerva, dal cervello del poeta... Confondere insieme la Beatrice del libello con questa del poema, significa non intender nulla della mirabile genesi psicologica e artistica del fantasma che affascino Dante e ne informò tutta l'opera poetica."

50, p. 176. — Chistoni, 92-124.

51, p. 176. — "E avvegna che duro mi fosse ne la prima entrare ne la loro sentenza, finalmente v'entrai tanto entro, quanto l'arte di gramatica ch'io avea e un poco di mio ingegno potea fare..." *Conv.* II, XII (XIII) 4.

52, p. 176. — V. N. xxx (xxx1), 1.

53, p. 176. — "Per lo quale ingegno molte cose, quasi come sognando, già vede, sì come ne la Vita Nuova si può vedere." *Conv.* II, XII (XIII), 4.

54, p. 177. — Chistoni, 58.

55, p. 177. — The belief that Dante was at Bologna during his adolescence is based chiefly on the sonnet, "Non mi poriano già mai fare ammenda," in which the Garisenda tower at Bologna is compared with another the superiority of which the poet ought to have understood even before he saw it. The sonnet, written before 1287, may be speaking metaphorically of the superiority of the poetry of Cavalcanti over that of Guinizelli. The canzone "La dispietata mente," which speaks of "lo dolce paese c'ho lasciato" and seems to belong to an early period, may have nothing to do with Bologna. Other evidences, such as Dante's acquaintance with Oderisi da Gubbio and Venedico Caccianimico, are even less conclusive. Cf. Salvadori, 150-54; Zingarelli, 110-13; Barbi in *BSDIt.* X, 317, n. 2; Filippini, 3-7 and the references given there.

56, p. 177. — For the comparative abundance of manual text-books of grammar and rhetoric, readers, exempla, theological summaries, arts of poetry, see Haskins 130-50 and 358, and

Manacorda 207-45 and 255-82, but Manacorda's tables of the contents of Italian libraries, pp. 345-50, argue a remarkable scarcity even of these books.

57, p. 177. — Santangelo admits (p. 15) that the "ragioni" of the *Vita Nuova* must have been modelled on the Provençal "razos", although he thinks that Dante did not know those which have come down to us.

58, p. 177. — It is on these legends and visions that his mystical appetite would first be fed. Marigo, 41-65, has well illustrated the Biblical inspiration of the *Vita Nuova*. Interpretation of parts of the Bible might be derived from commentaries by great authors in some cases, but more probably from instruction at school or from the more accessible summaries of doctrine which were almost as plentiful as the "artes dictaminis"; and so for information about angels and heaven. Indications of the works of Augustine, Aquinas, Albertus, or even Bonaventura, as sources of knowledge during the years 1283-91, are suggestions of possibilities without any certainty: the Confessions of St. Augustine and the *Itinerarium* of Bonaventura seem the least improbable of such sources.

59, p. 178. — Cf. Villani, Lib. VII, cap. LXXXVIII.

60, p. 178. — Cf. Gardner, 10: "Throughout the *Vita Nuova*, the perfect troubadour and the incipient mystic are reacting upon each other; troubadour conventions and troubadour motives are receiving mystical colouring; mystical feeling and, at the end, what seems mystical experience are finding expression in troubadour phraseology."

61, p. 178. — The "divisioni" of the *Vita Nuova* have been explained as modelled after the commentaries of St. Thomas on the works of Aristotle, cf. Wicksteed, 125-26, but it seems certain that this manner of expounding a text was older than St. Thomas. Rajna, who first noted the resemblance, in *Str. Dant. Anno primo*, 1902, p. 113, did not suppose that Aquinas was the source. The method belongs to the schools. Nicholas Trivet begins his commentary on the Consolation of Boethius as follows:

Carmina qui, etc. Presens liber Boetii prima sui divisione dividitur in quinque partes, secundum quod ponit quinque libros partiales quos continet. In primo conqueritur se miseriis subiectum. In secundo ponit remedia consolativa. In tertio determinat de vera felicitate in quo sit sita: et quomodo ad eam perveniatur. In quarto movet quasdam questiones ipsi philosophie. In quinto determinat de casu et providentia divina. Primus liber incipit hic *Carmina*. Secundus liber incipit ibi *Post hoc paulisper*. Tertius ibi *Jam cantum illa finiverat*. Quartus ibi *Hec cum philosophia*. Quintus ibi *Dixerat orationisque cursum*.

The comment on the first poem begins as follows:

Et dividitur hoc primum metrum in quatuor partes. Primo Boetius deplangit statum sue miserie ex parte permutationis studii. Secundo ex parte defectus corporalis. Tertio ex parte prolongationis vite miserabilis. Quarto apostrophat quondam suos amicos. Secunda ibi *Gloria felicitis*. Tertia pars ibi *Mors hominum felix*. Quarta ibi *Quid me felicem*. Boethius Lib. I. fo. 1., lit. A.

Brunetto Latini knew the tradition too, cf. Latini, 11:

Poi che Tullio avea dette le prime due parti del suo prologo, si comincia la terza parte, nella quale dice tre cose. Imprima dice che pare a lui di sapienza, infino là dove dice: "Per la qual cosa." Et quivi comincia la seconda, nella quale dice che pare a lui d'eloquenza, infino là ove dice: "Ma quello il quale s'arma." Et quivi comincia la terza, ne la quale dice che pare a lui dell' una e dell'altra giunte insieme.

The scattered single sentences in the *Vita Nuova* which purport or seem to be quotations from ancient or mediaeval authors are properly suspected to be derived from some more accessible source. Such are, e. g., the quotation from Homer in chapter one; that from Aristotle in chapter forty-one, the popularity of which Chistoni has shown (52-54); "Ego tanquam centrum" etc. in chapter twelve. The sentence "Nomina sunt consequentia rerum" in XIII, which has been much discussed as showing Dante's sympathy with this and that school of philosophy, has recently been shown by Nardi, in *GSLLI*. XCIII, 101-05, to be without any philosophical significance. It is a common gloss in several works composing the *Corpus iuris civilis*: and must have been a "household word" among law students.

62, p. 178. — Cf. e. g., Scherillo 1, 329-70.

63, p. 180. — Vossler 2, II Bd., I Th., p. 833. The continuation of the passage is: "der musste, den Verlauf seiner Jugend überschauend, in all seinen Erlebnissen ein inneres Schicksal, eine göttliche Fügung, die ihn zu etwas Grösserem hindrängte, bereits erkannt haben. Dieses Schicksalsmässige aus dem bunten Stoffe einer Reihe von Vorkommnissen und Erlebnissen, die sich vom neunten bis zum siebenundzwanzigsten Lebensjahre des Dichters erstrecken, herausarbeiten, ist eine Absicht, vielleicht die einzige Absicht der V. N." The essential character of the *Vita Nuova* is here truly perceived, and I think that the author of it had already glimpsed the end toward which he had been miraculously led, that is to an illumination which he was afterwards to achieve completely and express perfectly in the *Commedia*, but I do not think that either substance or plan of the *Commedia* had as yet occurred to him. As Witte remarked to D'Ancona, if Dante had thought that he was to write the great poem, he would never have said in V. N. xxv.: "E questo è contra coloro che rimano sopra altra materia che amorosa." Cf. D'Ancona, *Dal mio carteggio*. Pisa, 1912, Lettera XIV.

64, p. 180. — We must except the theory of Valli, according to which the "Fedeli d'Amore" possessed the key of code meanings which he supplies to us, and would have needed nothing more to understand the book.

65, p. 180. — The following is a brief summary, with remarks of my own, of the chief twentieth-century explanations of an allegorical kind:

Pascoli's allegory of the *Vita Nuova* is a by-product of his interpretation of the allegory in the *Commedia*. He found the key to the latter in St. Augustine's *Contra Faustum* (1, 436, 446; 2, pp.

xxvii-xxx). Beatrice, like Rachel according to St. Augustine, is "la speranza della contemplazione di Dio," "la dottrina della sapienza," "la desiderata e sperata bellissima dilettazione della dottrina," "la bella e perfetta sapienza," "la translucida verità," "Sapientia, dunque, diciamo." (1, 477-78). Pascoli is so sure that the "mirabile visione" of V. N. xlii (xliii) is "presso a poco" (1, 488) what Dante relates at length in the *Commedia*, that he calls his own work on the *Commedia* "La mirabile visione." It must be so because at the end of the *Vita Nuova* Dante goes astray from the guidance of Beatrice and then penitently returns to it, and in the *Commedia* he does the same (1, 489). Accordingly the allegory of the *Commedia* is applied to the *Vita Nuova*, but it concerns only the person of Beatrice and her relation to the poet. Pascoli believes that Beatrice is a real woman in the *Vita Nuova*, as well as a symbol (1, 14; 2, 12, 20) and that the *donna gentile* is only an invented person allegorized in the *Convivio* (2, 124-26). It is not clear to what extent the prose of the *Vita Nuova* is considered allegorical, but it is notable that the poems *Donne che avete* and *Donna Pietosa* are explained allegorically. In the former Beatrice is actually declared to be "la speranza" (2, 21-30), and in the latter the imagined death of Beatrice is, like that of Rachel, the "mentis excessus" by means of which the hope of direct contemplation of the truth is realized (2, 30-40). We are not directly concerned with the allegory of the *Commedia*, but very much might be said against the importation of Pascoli's interpretation of that allegory into the *Vita Nuova*. To suppose that the "mirabile visione" was in any way equivalent to the subject of the *Commedia* is unjustified, but even if that supposition were acceptable it would not warrant the reading into the *Vita Nuova* of the allegory of the *Commedia*. As for understanding that allegory in the canzoni "Donne che avete" and "Donna Pietosa," which, according to Dante, were written long before he had the "mirabile visione," that is going far beyond what can be called reasonable.

For Scarano (Scarano 1) Beatrice is a symbol of "la libertà santa," freedom both political (Beatrice was born in the year of the battle of Benevento) and spiritual. The first meeting with her forecasts the struggle between the rational and the inferior parts of Dante's soul, and the struggle continues through the story until the complete victory comes. The denial of the salutation marks a period of yielding to the senses, when the rational faculty releases them. The "gabbo" indicates the intolerance of Beatrice toward Dante's weakness. The poems of "praise" mark a period when reason rules the senses. The letter to the "principi della terra" was about the political servitude of the city, and the canzone *Gli occhi dolenti* expresses sorrow for the same unhappy condition. The poems of the *Vita Nuova* were written some of them for a real Beatrice and some for the idea of liberty, and when Dante undertook to compose the book as an introduction to the *Commedia*, he put together the two kinds, making them all allegorical. It is evident that according to this view the *Vita Nuova* is an allegory only in as far as Beatrice is a symbol; otherwise and apart from

the political side of the allegory, which is only touched on, this might just as well be an explanation of the literal sense alone; the story of the liberation of Dante from servitude to his inferior faculties, under the influence of Beatrice. Scarano is persuaded of the symbolical character of Beatrice partly by her supernatural qualities, but especially by the *Commedia*. He says ((Scarano 1, 55-56): "Quelli che non vogliono sentir parlare di senso allegorico nel libello, concederanno che Dante scrivendolo non solo mirasse già alla Beatrice del poema, e ve la figurasse come docile o suscettibile a divenire simbolo, ma gettasse altresì, ove gli riuscisse, come i germi da cui si avesse a svolgere quel simbolo appunto." That Dante already had the *Commedia* in mind, however, is too much to concede. Nevertheless one cannot help regretting that one has to differ with Scarano about anything, considering how admirably clear is the reasoning, both here and in his *Prolegomeni* (Scarano 2), how calmly and modestly his conclusions are affirmed, and how charming is his style.

Federzoni 1, 416-17, speaking of the last chapter of the *Vita Nuova*, says: "Le altre parole che vengono subito appresso *si com' ella sa veracemente* hanno un importantissimo e simbolico significato; che voglion dire: 'La *Scienza divina* stessa, la *Teologia*, ch'è la beatrice del mio intelletto, ben sa quanto io, suo amatore, studio per mettermi in grado di trattare di lei degnamente.' Ciò poteva egli ben affermare verso il 1300." (Would Federzoni admit that Dante could not have affirmed that in 1292?) "Ora Beatrice, che nel momento della morte era ancora e solo la donna amata, invece nel momento in cui fu scritta la *Vita Nuova* era già sublimata nel pensiero del poeta così, da dover egli sentirsi insufficiente a trattarne prima di aver fatto gli studi della teologia." The allegory, which applies only to the person of Beatrice, seems evident to Federzoni because he believes that the *Vita Nuova* was written in 1300, to show how the poet had come to his vision of the *Commedia* (412-13).

The work of Grasso is chiefly devoted to confuting the theories of realists. On the positive side he holds that the *Vita Nuova* is partly true historically and partly fiction, and there is an allegorical meaning, but one cannot tell where it begins or ends (183). Beatrice is a vague symbol which may vary in meaning according to places and circumstances, "elasticità possibile per l'indeterminatezza" (223). "Beatrice è dunque il principio razionale, o, come diremmo oggi, psichico, spirituale nell' uomo; quindi la libertà dell' arbitrio, massimo dono di Dio all'uomo, e a lui singolare fra tutti gli esseri della terra; quindi la facoltà speculativa, alla quale 'ancillantur tanquam optimo agibilia et factibilia omnia'; quindi la scienza divina o Sapienza, mira suprema dell' intelletto" (239). These meanings are derived from obvious passages of the *Commedia* and the *Monarchia*, and also from the *Summa* of Aquinas, as is natural for one who is persuaded that the works of Dante are a unity, "le opere stesse del poeta." "Quelle le fonti genuine" (253). "L'operetta giovanile e il gran poema, connessi dall' autore medesimo nella chiusa della prima, costituiscono... il gran dramma dell' anima nelle sue sedi terrena e ultraterrena, il dramma dell'u-

manità medievale, anzi dell' umanità di tutti i tempi e di tutte le nazioni, ecc." (241).

Gargano Cosenza undertakes to find a reasonable middle way between the extremes of literalism and allegorism (Gargano C. 2, 28). He believes in an allegory of the *Vita Nuova* because of the unworldly religious style, "quel fare mistico, quello stile biblico, quel linguaggio da ispirato" (11-12); because Beatrice seems to be identified with "un Dio cioè con Amore, anzi quasi con Gesù Cristo stesso" (43); because of the effect of her salutation, "or chi non vede che non può essere il saluto d'una donna capace di tanto..." (102); because of the 'mirabile visione', "...se Dante, mentre scriveva la prima opera, aveva in mente la seconda, dove Beatrice doveva necessariamente figurare sotto veste allegorica, è logico che questo mutamento in allegoria fosse iniziato nell'opera che aveva in mano" (112). He does not seem to make any clear distinction between allegorization and idealization, e. g. "...se Dante quando scriveva gli ultimi capitoli aveva già in mente un'allegoria, se vedeva già trasformata, angelicata, allegorizzata la sua Beatrice..." (14), and although he examines a number of episodes in the *Vita Nuova*, the only allegory he discovers, if we except one place where Amore is said to represent Dante's soul, is that Beatrice represents "*rectitudo voluntatis* che porta la beatitudine e quindi anche... la beatitudine che viene dalla *rectitudo voluntatis* e che forma con essa quasi una cosa sola" (79). The "donne dello schermo" are "false immagini di bene," but this is their literal meaning. Although he admits that Dante was not greatly learned when he wrote the *Vita Nuova*, and that there is danger of attributing to him ideas which he could not then have (44), he goes on to use large quotations from the *Ethics* of Aristotle and the *Summa* of Aquinas, as well as the *Civitas Dei* of Augustine. Needless to say the meaning of Beatrice as a symbol is evidenced chiefly from the *Commedia*, *Monarchia*, and *Convivio*.

Zappia, after examining the poems of the *Vita Nuova* in detail (171-286), pointing out discrepancies between the verse and prose accounts, and so attacking the historicity of the narrative, comes to the following conclusion: "È un racconto sui generis; pensamento oscuro ed enigmatico, a disegno inverosimile ed incongruente, a bello studio incoerente ed assurdo, non pare che possa essere altro che una concezione allegorica" (283). He does not undertake to show in what the "concezione allegorica" may consist, or how, if understood as an allegory, the story might become less "incoherent and absurd." Nor is this his task in the vigorous and acute defence of allegory as potential poetry — against Croce — in *RCLII*. XXVI, 56-90, where, however, at the end of the article (89-90) he appeals to students of Dante to acknowledge that "la V. N. è un racconto allegorico," as the first necessary step without taking which it will always be impossible to understand the book.

Beck's view of the *Vita Nuova* is that it is an allegorical account of the conflict between Faith and Science in the soul of Dante. "Diese geistige Entwicklung vom Glauben (Beatrice) auf dem Umwege der Philosophie (donna gentile) zum erstarkten Glauben

(Beatrice in ihrer Verklärung) bildet der Inhalt der Vita Nuova" (445-46, n. 1). He is at one in this view with Earle, whom he quotes in *ZRPh.* XLV (1925), p. 49. Beatrice is "die Glaubenswahrheit" (Beck, 433, n. 1): the conflict with rational knowledge begins with the advent of the *donna gentile*, who is Philosophy. The reconciliation between the two begins with the *Convivio* and continues with the *Monarchia* and the *Commedia* (*ZRPh.* XLV, 48-50). The evidence is nearly all in the *Convivio*. It is there that we learn that the *donna gentile* is Philosophy, and that Philosophy is not hostile to Faith. Without a proper understanding of the *Convivio* the *Vita Nuova* would be incomprehensible to us, according to this view, but the view itself supposes that both Dante and his readers were less concerned with problems of love and love-poetry than they were with the weighty problems quoted from Baumgartner (*ZRPh.* XLV, 49): "Wie verhält sich der Offenbarungsglaube (πίστις) zum Wissen (γνῶσις), zur Philosophie, zur Vernunft? Welches sind ihre Quellen, ihre Grenzen, ihre Gewissheitsgrade, ihre beiderseitigen Beziehungen? Stehen sie gegensätzlich zueinander in einem unausgleichbaren Widerspruche oder nicht? Wenn nicht, wie ist das beiderseitige Verhältniss zu bestimmen? Vermag Wissen und Vernunft dem Glauben Dienste zu leisten, inwieweit und in welcher Weise? Vermag die πίστις zur γνῶσις fortzuschreiten, zum Wissen zu werden, in welchem Sinne und bis zu welchem Grade? Wem gebührt die Superiorität und wem ist das letzte und bewusste Wahrheitskriterium zu entnehmen?" These are the questions which Dante's friends would expect to find treated in the "libello", and so they would not have to wait for the publication of the more virile *Convivio*, to understand the simpler youthful work.

In *Mod. Phil.* XI, 19-37, Professor Fletcher aims "to demonstrate a continuous allegory in the *Vita Nuova*, conveying a message substantially identical with that of the *Divina Commedia*" (19). The word "demonstrate" may seem strange, considering that in this article there is only the sketch of an allegory applied to the book, but it is explained on p. 20 by the words "the test of an allegory is its fitting," which seem to mean that if an allegory suitable to a narrative can be constructed, it is thereby demonstrated that the author intended that allegory. "Dante will give, he says, the *sentenzia*, that is, literally, the gist of the story of his gradually purified desire of Beatrice; allegorically, its significance in terms of that which her name intends, to wit, *beatitudine* or blessedness" (20). The words "purified desire," in the statement of the literal sense, seem unhappy, for "desire" seems to imply a hope of possession, and Dante's love for Beatrice is nothing less than pure at the beginning of the story. The "significance in terms" of the meaning of Beatrice's name is that Beatrice is not only a bestower of blessedness but a symbol of the abstract Blessedness, and since perfect blessedness consists in the vision of God, she is also a symbol of the Vision of God. Just as in the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* Dante sees God reflected in the eyes of Beatrice as in a mirror, until he comes to the direct vision of God, so it is in the *Vita Nuova*, where each successive vision is a step toward the desired

end, toward Beatrice, toward the clear vision of God. An important part of the "significance in terms" of the name Beatrice is Aquinas' doctrine (in his comment on St. Paul's "vision in enigma") of the three kinds of vision, the third of which is of two degrees: "clear" and "hidden in enigma." The vision of God is clarified by Faith, Hope and Charity, especially Charity, which, as St. Thomas says in the *Summa*, is the love of God "as the object of blessedness." "The protagonists of the allegorical drama," says Mr. Fletcher, are "Charity and Pride." Charity is no doubt *Amore* in the literal sense, but the other "protagonist," the Pride which turns Dante away from Beatrice, has no correspondent in the literal sense. But for the application of the doctrine of Aquinas, and of the allegory of the *Commedia*, which turns Beatrice into the symbol of an abstract, this allegory of the *Vita Nuova* is not distinguishable from the literal sense, according to which Beatrice leads the poet on by stages to a higher knowledge and a better love. As for the application of the allegory of the *Commedia*, Mr. Fletcher says: "It may be objected that Dante had not yet the symbolic imagery of the *Paradiso* in mind. For my part I do not clearly see how anyone can know. In any case, it is for the doubters to explain the coincidence" (24, n. 3). No, it is for those who assert that there is a coincidence to make it clear, and *credo quia incredibile* ought not to be our motto.

The theory of allegory in the *Vita Nuova*, set forth in RR. XI, 95-148, in which Dante has become a symbol of "noble adolescence" and Beatrice of the Virgin Mary and Wisdom, is constructed on the foundation of three mistakes: a misunderstanding of V. N. xxv, of *Conv.* I, 1, 14-18, and of the chronological relation between the account of the Donna Gentile in the *Convivio* and that in the *Vita Nuova*. Mr. Fletcher cannot believe that in V. N. xxv Dante is seriously subscribing to a convention restricting poetry in the vulgar tongue to the subject of love. Nor can he believe that Dante is seriously defending his right to use the figure of personification (95-97). He believes that Dante wrote both *Vita Nuova* and *Convivio* with the intention of representing himself as adolescent and ignorant in the one, mature and learned in the other, and with this purpose made illlogical and apparently frivolous arguments in V. N. xxv (110 and 114-15). This view explains why Dante in *Conv.* II, XII (XIII) represents himself as ignorant of philosophy when he wrote the *Vita Nuova*, whereas his "disdain" for "the average reader," says Mr. Fletcher, "is as apparent in the *Vita Nuova* as in the *Paradiso*, and the very passage in the *Convivio* concludes in the same key. *Absit vulgum profanum*" [*sic*] (113). "At that time, in 1290, he had been for seven years the friend, increasingly intimate, of Guido Cavalcanti" (113), but when Dante wrote the sonnet *Io mi senti' svegliar*, he did not know that Guido was no longer on good terms with Giovanna Primavera. Mr. Fletcher concludes, however (116-20), supported by the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and Horace's Art of Poetry, that the argument of V. N. xxv is after all not really frivolous. It is really a declaration that the *Vita Nuova* is an allegory. The initiated would, I suppose, understand it, and it is therefore only to the

uninitiated that Dante is misrepresenting himself as a foolish adolescent. This idea that Dante is consciously misrepresenting himself is chiefly based on *Conv.* I, i, 17: "E io in quella dinanzi, a l'entrata de la mia gioventute parlai," which Mr. Fletcher interprets: *E io in quella, parlai de la mia gioventute dinanzi all' entrata*; "He meant that he spoke of his youth as the youth he then was" (102). He says: "To construe 'dinanzi' as qualifying 'quella', so allowing Dante to say 'parlai all' entrata' is ingenious but unnatural Italian" (98, n. 8), but why shouldn't Dante say "quella dinanzi" if it was good enough Italian for him to say in *Con.* II, viii (ix) 4: "quello di prima" and "questo dipoi"? It does not seem to me unnatural Italian, and if his interpretation is correct, what does Mr. Fletcher make of the rest of the sentence: "e in questa dipoi, quella già trapassata"? The third mistake needs only to be mentioned. Speaking of the "trenta mesi" of *Con.* II, xii (xiii), Mr. Fletcher says: "It seems to be ignored that by Dante's literal statement these 'thirty months' of highly intensive theological and philosophical study, resulting in allegorical presentation in poetry, ostensibly of love, correspond in time with the episode of the donna pietosa of the *Vita Nuova*, and indeed not with the whole of that, but only its upward curve; so that we have Dante's own word for it that before he composed the *Vita Nuova* he was actually using allegory to express philosophical and theological thought" (112). In the passage in question Dante is telling us how he came to write *Voi che intendendo*, a poem which was composed after the *Vita Nuova*.

Lora's "Nuova interpretazione della *Vita Nuova*" is concerned only with Beatrice and, incidentally, the Donna Gentile. The latter is said to be a vague symbol of Philosophy without any corresponding reality (114). The novelty of his view as regards Beatrice consists in carrying to an extreme the error of reading into the *Vita Nuova* the contents of the *Commedia*. Beatrice is in the former exactly what she is in the latter, the only difference being that in the *Vita Nuova* she is a living woman, in the *Commedia* a spirit. She is the "Idea-Sapienza, ab aeterno" first "nella mente divina, in potenza," then "in atto, nel suo breve pellegrinaggio terreno, impedito però, dall'involucro corporeo," then "in atto, assunta in cielo, nella sua massima virtù e splendore" (138). She is not merely a woman and she is not merely a symbol, and, more important still, she is not a woman who becomes transformed into a symbol. Lora prefers not to call her a symbol even in the *Commedia*. She is at the beginning of the *Vita Nuova* what she is at the end of the *Paradiso*, a real woman who is also the "Idea-Sapienza," not allegorically but miraculously. "...la gloriosa donna, vagheggiata ab aeterno da Dio, con singolare compiacenza, mandata in terra, sotto veste corporea, a illuminare il predestinato Poeta e le genti, non si trasforma, non si trasumana; ella non simboleggia; ell' è la Sapienza divina..." (138). Dante did not imagine her in any way; he simply recorded the miracle (103).

66, p. 183. — Cf. Delécluze tr. p. LXV; Moore, 136-37; Federn tr. 1; Picciola in *Lect. Dant. Op. Min.* 105; Gardner, 8; Manacorda ed. p. vi.

67, p. 184. — Cf. De Labusquette, 116-17; Manacorda ed. 105, n. 9; Fioretto ed. 25.

68, p. 187. — Cf. the sonnet *Vedeste, al mio parere*, verses 12-14: "Quando v'apparve che ne già dogliendo, — fu dolce sonno ch'allor si compiea, — chè 'l su' contraro lo venia vincendo." Dante, *Rime*, II.

69, p. 187. — V. N. v. 1: "una gentile donna di molto piacevole aspetto, la quale mi mirava spesse volte, ecc."

70, p. 187. — V. N. v. 3: "Allora mi confortai molto, ecc." V. N. VII, 4: "ch'io mi sentia dir dietro spesse fiate: — 'Deo, per qual dignitate — così leggiadro questi lo core have?'"

71, p. 189. — Cf. Chistoni 68-73. For the traditional symbolic use of other numbers see De Labusquette, 606-09. Cf. also Melodia ed. 211-13, n. 14, and the references given there.

72, p. 189. — V. N. XXIX (xxx), 4: "Forse ancora per più sottile persona si vederebbe in ciò più sottile ragione; ma questa è quella ch'io ne veggio, e che più mi piace." More subtle persons have not been lacking, who have discovered more nines than Dante mentions as well as threes which he does not mention. Even the discreet De Labusquette, who mistrusts the alleged significance of numerical coincidences in the verse of the *Vita Nuova* (606, n. 1), says, speaking of the prose: "Quand il nomme Amour,... il répète trois fois ce nom redoutable. Dans chacun des paragraphes 9, 16, 18, 20, les trois mots *Amore* sont si rapprochés et il eût été si facile d'éviter cette répétition que l'intention du poète se révèle de la manière la plus claire" (604). One would judge from these words that Dante never mentions *Amore* in the prose chapters without doing it three times in each, but the fact is that in V. N. iv he uses the word four times, in XXIII twice, in XII only once, to speak only of these three chapters. In V. N. iv the space in which the word occurs four times is very small indeed and here too the poet could have easily avoided the repetition. The triple occurrence of the word in the chapters indicated by De Labusquette has therefore no more significance than the coincidences in the verse, which he properly disposes.

Of course the nines have been used to support the theory that the *Vita Nuova* is an allegory, but Dante's own account of their significance ought to be sufficient. Beatrice was accompanied by this number during her life on Earth because she was a perfect product of the forces of nature — the indirect creation — (the nine moving heavens), and of the power of God — the direct creation — (the persons of the trinity). She was like Petrarch's Laura: "quantunque può Natura — e il Ciel tra noi." Judging by Dante's willingness to listen to other more subtle explanations, we may guess that he might not have been displeased even by the various allegorical interpretations of his *Vita Nuova* that have been offered in more recent times (cf. Vossler's wise conjecture in *LBIGRPh*. 1903, p. 382), but such a conjecture is no reason for attributing any of those interpretations to him.

The symmetrical structure of the *Vita Nuova*, with its three canzoni separated by two sequences of shorter poems equal to each other in number, and introduced and followed by two other such

sequences — the structure noted by Rossetti, made clear by Norton, and detended by McKenzie — is an undeniable fact, but only persons "more subtle" than Dante would attempt to derive from this arrangement more than its obvious significance. It testifies to the poet's love of symmetry, and dignifies the whole work with religious solemnity by sealing it with the sacred numbers, 3 and 1, with their product and sum. Other more elaborate explanations and analyses of the structure of the book, such as that of Federzoni (2, 25-30), may be appropriate, but one cannot help doubting that they were ever part of the intention of the author. Cf. Scherillo ed. and the references given there in the appendix.

73, p. 189. — "Sie war für ihn das Süsseste, was Gott schaffen konnte, etwas von himmlisches Natur, das zu seinen Ursprung zurückkehrte, ein liebliches Wunder, ein "Novum", eine "Neun", deren Wurzel die "Drei" ist, also etwas, was die höchste Dreifaltigkeit selbst in liebender Absicht geschaffen. Das ist alles nur Exaltation des entzückten Liebenden. Das wird dem, der jung liebt, gar nicht so übermässig vorkommen. Ebensowenig, dass die Stadt verödet war, als sie starb." Federn tr. 113.

The hypothesis of Grandgent (2, 142-45) that the starting point in Dante's quest for nines was the lost "sirventese" in which Beatrice happened to be mentioned in the ninth place, seems to me as reasonable as it is acute. However it is not clear to me that the thirtieth position was any more conspicuous than the ninth, or that Dante's choice of the ninth place for Beatrice shows that, at the time of writing, she was not first in his esteem.

74, p. 189. — Cf. Fletcher in *RR*. XI, 97 and 120.

75, p. 190. — Cf. Pascoli, 2, 59-60, n. 1.

76, p. 190. — Cf. Fletcher in *RR*. XI, 119-20.

77, p. 190. — Cf. Goldschmidt, 8 and 17-21, Gaspary 1, 70-71; Cavalcanti in "Donna mi prega" is not above demonstrating that Love is invisible. Dante, *Rime Dubbie* xxix, 8: "Io dico che Amor non è sustanza, nè cosa corporal ch'abbia figura..."

78, p. 190. — V. N. xii, 17.

79, p. 190. — Cf. Marigo, 99.

80, p. 191. — An appropriate example would be the abuse of the figurative blindness of Love by Guido Orlandi, in the sonnet *Amico, i' sacco ben*, verses 8-11: "In te non trovo mai ch'uno difetto: — che vai dicendo in tra la savia gente — faresti amore piangere in tuo stato. — Non credo, poi non vede: quest'è piano." Rivalta ed. 33.

81, p. 191. — Aquinas, quoted in Chistoni, 172. Cf. *ibid.* 172-73, n. 3.

There is, it is true, a certain naïveté in the style of the whole chapter, not restricted to the discussion of personification. It appears in the simple details of the ingenuous argument: "E che io dica di lui come se fosse corpo, ancora sì come se fosse uomo, appare per tre cose che dico di lui. Dico che lo vidi venire; onde, con ciò sia cosa che venire dica moto locale, e localmente mobile per sè, secondo lo Filosofo, sia solamente corpo, appare che io ponga Amore essere corpo, ecc." It is all the more conspicuous in this chapter because the sentences are interspersed with scientific

terms such as "moto locale," "localmente mobile," and a little before: "sustanzia intelligente," "sustanzia corporale," "accidente in sustanzia." This is the naïveté that belongs to the *Vita Nuova*, an inseparable characteristic which becomes amusing only when the author is making a display of his limited scientific information, as here, or of his dialectical craft, as in *V. N.* xxii, 2: "Onde, con ciò sia cosa che cotale partire sia dolorosa a coloro che rimangono e sono stati amici di colui che se ne va; e nulla sia sì intima amistade come da buon padre a buon figliuolo e da buon figliuolo a buon padre; e questa donna fosse in altissimo grado di bontade, e lo suo padre, sì come da molti si crede e vero è, fosse bono in alto grado; manifesto è che questa donna fue amarissimamente piena di dolore."

82, p. 192. — Cf. Vossler I, 42: "Auch zu dem Satze: *Liebe ist Tugend* finden wir die ersten Keime wieder bei den Provenzalen..." — Rossi, in *Lect. Dant. Op. Min.* especially pp. 40 and 41, where, speaking of the poetry of Guinizelli, he says: "L'amor della donna si conciliava coll'amore di Dio, senza che per questo fosse necessario cancellar lei dal novero delle cose amabili per sostituirla una astrazione intellettuale." — Parodi in *BSDIt.* XIII, 241 ss., especially pp. 246-47. — Savi Lopez, especially pp. 18 and 23: "Dopo la serie dei rimatori italiani, non germogliò un albero nuovo — ma l'arbusto disseccato rifiorì," and p. 53, n. where he quotes from Walter von der Vogelweide: "Ja ich begehre andern Lohn — von keiner, als nur ihren Gruss." — Bertoni, *Il dolce stil nuovo* in *St. Med.* II, 352 ss. especially pp. 387-88, 390 and 398-400, where he speaks of Adam de la Halle and the north French lyric. Cf. also De Lollis in *St. Med.* I, 5 ss. and Cian, *op. cit.* No one suspects allegory in the Provençal love lyric except Valli, (125-26) who does not examine the poems.

83, p. 193. — *V. N.* xvi; xxii, 17; xxvi; xxxv (xxxvi); xxxvi (xxxvii); xxxvii (xxxviii); xxxix (xl); xl (xli).

84, p. 193. — The all too familiar statement that the *Vita Nuova* is full of symbolism needs to be explained and may be misleading. In his famous essay on *Beatrice*, Dr. Moore observed (147-49) that to the mediaeval mind everything had a symbolic meaning, which was assumed to be truer than the literal or obvious meaning. He quoted Professor Caird to the effect that in the Middle Ages "the world of the living was but a shadowy appearance, through which the eternal realities of another world were continually betraying themselves." He felt sure that in this respect the mediaeval mind differed from the modern. My own impression is that the modern mind is not really different. Certainly the average person, whether learned or ignorant, speaks and acts as if good and evil, right and wrong, beauty and hideousness, to mention only a few abstracts, were realities independent of good and bad things, beautiful and ugly things, etc. The sentence "there is no justice in this law" implies that justice subsists apart from just laws. The unanimous admission that human statements can only be approximately and relatively true implies a belief in a truth that is not relative or approximate. It matters not whether such a belief be defensible or only illusory, it is a belief to which every mind is

accessible. To the modern mind, as to the mediaeval, all the phenomena of life are partial and transitory illustrations of more durable verities which are by themselves imperceptible: they are symbols of assumed realities. In this respect we are all practical realists even though we may be theoretical nominalists. In our times the utterances of the hardest-headed scientists, physicists and astronomers, are couched in language that reminds one of that of Augustine and St. Paul. It is made clear to us that the evidence of our senses is reliable only within an exceedingly limited domain, and that the limitations of our imagination are pitiable. Anything that we can imagine is but the dimmest suggestion of what the true state of things in the universe may be. If Dr. Moore were writing now, I think he would not insist on so marked a distinction between the habits of the mediaeval mind and those of the modern.

As for conventional symbols in use in literature, it is no doubt true that many such symbols were familiar to the mediaeval mind which are unfamiliar to us. It is not at all true, however, that our literatures are deficient in symbols. A metaphor is a symbolical use of a word, and all poetical literature consists chiefly of metaphorical language. The *Vita Nuova* is a poetical work, full of symbolical, that is metaphorical, language. Some of the conventional symbols may be obscure to us, but those which are either original with the author or not unknown to modern usage are just as intelligible to us as to the mediaeval reader.

The statement that the *Vita Nuova* is full of symbolism has nothing to do with the question whether it is an allegory or not, for the word "allegory" applied to a work of literature means that that work has a double subject, and that the symbols employed are systematically coordinated so as to describe a subject which is different from, although comparable to, the apparent subject.

85, p. 194. — III, *Ego tanquam*, etc., and IV, *E che dirà*, etc.

86, p. 194. — V. N. XIII, 5.

87, p. 194. — V. N. XIII, 10.

88, p. 198. — It is only natural that others beside her privileged lover should benefit by her presence, otherwise the poet's praise of her would be diminished. Petrarch too felt the propriety of representing others as affected by the vision of Laura: "Ch'è sola un sol, non pur agli occhi miei, — ma al mondo cieco, che vertù non cura."

89, p. 199. — V. N. xxx (xxxi), 1.

90, p. 199. — V. N. xxiii and xxiv. Those to whom it seems amusing that the wife of Messer Simone de' Bardi should be so glorified should remember that the Virgin Mary was the wife of a well-known carpenter.

91, p. 199. — V. N. xxxi (xxxii), 14 and 16.

92, p. 200. — V. N. xli (xlii), 10.

93, p. 200. — V. N. xxxi (xxxii), 10.

94, p. 200. — V. N. xxxiii (xxxiv), 7.

95, p. 200. — Even at the height of her idealization Beatrice remains no more than a miraculously angelic woman. She is by divine grace superior to other women, and she has been specially created to demonstrate to Dante the beauty of holiness, so that

his love for her becomes worship of her spiritual beauty. Plainly, she is well suited to become a symbolic figure in an allegory like the *Commedia*, but in the *Vita Nuova* she is not yet a double personality. That D'Ancona (147) and Flamini (ed. 102) were mistaken in believing that she becomes a symbol after her death seems to me to be shown not only by the negative evidence, but conclusively by the words "spero di dicer di lei quello che mai non fue detto d'alcuna," which cannot be interpreted allegorically.

96, p. 200. — V. N. xxxix (xl), 2.

97, p. 202. — Cf. Scherillo 2, 248-50.

98, p. 203. — The *Commedia* begins with Dante lost in the "selva oscura" and unable to save himself. He is rescued by Beatrice and Virgil. The *Vita Nuova* begins in the innocent childhood of the hero.

Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova* may not improperly be called Dante's saviour, in the sense that her influence enables him to avoid the dangers of worldliness, and without it he would have been in danger, but there is no rescue of the perishing, no conversion and repentance. When, after her death, he falters attracted by the prospect of consolation, she comes promptly to his assistance, but he blames himself only for disloyalty to her memory, and this incident is at the end of the story.

99, p. 203. — Azzolina in *St. Cr. Cesareo*, 112-13, cites passages from Cesareo ed. (pp. i and lxx ss.) in which the latter points out certain characteristics of the *Vita Nuova* as the essential one. Azzolina, finding similar characteristics in the *Commedia*, concludes that the two works are essentially alike. The conclusion is only possible because both scholars believe that the central idea of the *Vita Nuova* is the spiritual evolution of Dante from sensuality to rationality, and that Beatrice, who is an aesthetic creation of the author's mind, is nothing more than the means employed by Providence in that spiritual evolution.

"Beatrice vi sta non come fine, ma come mezzo, come strumento della Provvidenza, 'a ciò che Dante — nota lo stesso Cesareo — potesse uscire dalla nebbia del senso alla luce della ragione'."

"Sicchè nella *Vita Nuova* l'azione della gentilissima e del *Signore della nobiltà* si spiega concordemente perchè la giovanile vita amorosa del poeta passi dalle viziose perturbazioni dell'appetito sensitivo alle operazioni virtuose dell'anima razionale e, dopo una temporanea ricaduta nelle allettative del senso, tenda alle speculazioni benefiche dell'intelletto."

There is too much in both Cesareo and Azzolina about sensuality in the *Vita Nuova*. Granted that there is a brief period in the story when the poet's love for Beatrice seems to have become a veritable human passion, even then that love has nothing to be ashamed of. Granted that the brief affection for the Donna Gentile was not a spiritual aspiration, it is condemned by the poet only because it was a disloyalty to the memory of Beatrice. There is nowhere in the book any flavour of fleshliness. It is the desire to find in the *Vita Nuova* something to correspond to the "selva selvaggia" of the *Inferno* that seems to have been the cause of expressions like "viziosa perturbazione dell'appetito sensitivo" and "ricaduta nelle

allettative del senso." The evolution described in the *Vita Nuova* is not an evolution from sensuality to intellectuality, no matter how many passages from the *Convivio* may be adduced, or appeals made to the irrelevant authority of Aristotle and St. Thomas (114-16): it is rather an evolution from conventional ignorance as to the nature of love to a clear understanding; and from vague, if entranced, admiration for Beatrice to the comprehension of her peculiar relation to the poet, as woman and saint. She is no mere "means" employed by Providence, she is *the* means for Dante, his saviour and heavenly queen, as Christ and the Virgin — to both of whom she is compared — are to all mankind. God and his providence are in the background but they have little to do either aesthetically or intentionally with the story.

100, p. 203. — Azzolina *ibid.* 112-13, quotes Cesareo as follows: "Due fini si prefisse dunque il poeta componendo la *Vita Nuova*: l'uno, ch'era il più rilevante, psicologico e morale, il graduale risveglio dell'anima sua dal bene in potenza al bene in atto, per virtù della grazia che gli fu concessa da Dio; l'altro di minore importanza, retorico e poetico o, come si direbbe oggi, estetico, la narrazione coerente d'una materia amorosa."

The one purpose is a vague scholastic aridity, the other is that of a "fine writer": both are dull objects such as by themselves could not have given life to this little work, which is alive and beautiful because it is an autobiographical story by a god-like human soul.

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The work of Carlotta Schloss: *Dante e il suo secondo amore*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1928, reached me when the first of these essays, "The Date of the V. N.," was already in print. I am pleased to see that the author distinguishes between a first appearance of the Donna Gentile and the second in 1293, "accompagnata d'amore" (p. 174). Otherwise the chronology of events concerned with the apparent conflict between V. N. and *Conv.* is derived from sources which I have criticized in the notes to my essay.

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- The editions of L. di Benedetto (*La Vita Nuova e il Canzoniere*, Torino, Unione tip. edit. Torinese, 1928) and G. Manacorda (*Vita Nuova*, Firenze, Rinascimento del Libro, 1928) did not reach me until all but the last of my essays were already in print. I am delighted to see that Di Benedetto's interpretation (pp. xix-xx) of verses 24-28 of the canzone "Donne che avete" is substantially the same as mine.

3. — PERIODICALS AND WORKS BY SEVERAL AUTHORS

- BSDIt.** — *Bullettino della Società Dantesca*, Nuova Serie.
- DDJ.** — *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch*.
- DVL.** — *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft*.
- DVOp.** — *Dante: la vita, le opere, le grandi città dantesche ecc.* Milano, Treves, 1921.
- FD.** — *Fanfulla della Domenica*.
- GD.** — *Giornale Dantesco*.
- GSLIt.** — *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana*.
- JDD.** — *Jahrbuch der deutschen Dantegesellschaft*.
- LBIGRPh.** — *Literaturblatt für germanische und romanische Philologie*.
- Lect. Dant. Op. Min.** — *Lectura Dantis: Opere Minori*. Firenze, Sansoni, 1906.
- LVRV.** — *Il Libro de varie romanze volgare. Cod. Vat. 3793*, a cura di F. Egidi con la collaborazione di S. Satta, G. B. Festa e G. Ciccone. Roma. Soc. Filolog. Romana, 1908.
- MLN.** — *Modern Language Notes*.
- MLR.** — *The Modern Language Review*.
- Misc.RT.** — *Miscellanea nuziale Rossi-Teiss* (Bergamo, 1897).
- Mod.Phil.** — *Modern Philology*.
- NAnt.** — *La Nuova Antologia*.
- NGWGöft.** — *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Phil.-Hist. Klasse*.
- NSM.** — *Nuovi Studi Medievali*.
- Pro.** — *Il Propugnatore*.
- QR.** — *The Quarterly Review*.
- Rass.** — *La Rassegna*.
- RBLIt.** — *Rassegna Bibliografica della Letteratura Italiana*.
- RCLIt.** — *Rassegna Critica della Letteratura Italiana*.
- RivCrLit.** — *Rivista Critica della Letteratura Italiana*.
- RDS.** — *Reports of the Dante Society. Cambridge, Massachusetts*.

Ro. — Romania.

RR. — The Romanic Review.

Str. Dant. — Strenna Dantesca.

St. Cesareo. — *Studi critici in onore di G. A. Cesareo.* Palermo, G. Priulla, s. a.

StD. — Studi Danteschi, ed. Barbi.

StGB. — *Studi su Giovanni Boccaccio.* A cura della Società della Valdelsa. Castelflorentino, 1913.

St.Med. — Studi Medievali.

VIT. — *La vita italiana nel trecento.* Conferenze tenute a Firenze nel 1891. Milano, Treves, 1895.

ZRPh. — *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie.*

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